

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Michelle Bell

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 317.

My name is Michelle Bell, an Ohio resident, and voter. I am a mother and grandmother. I am also a part-time college instructor and a retired federal employee (35 years). I urge you to vote against SB 317 which will put more guns in our schools by arming teachers and relaxing training requirements. I have one grandchild in elementary school and one grandchild in high school. Passing this bill heightens my concerns and fear for their safety.

"In an average year, 1,455 people die by guns in Ohio (everytown.org)". This number will increase with more guns in schools and homes (assuming that the gun will be their personal responsibility).

On February 10, 2019 gun violence took my son's life. Although it has been 18 months, there are times when it seems like only 18 weeks, 18 days, and 18 minutes have passed. My son is gone, and my life is not the same. One of life's most traumatic events is my reality. I buried my child.

The challenges and difficulties associated with murder loss seem insurmountable. The healing process is never-ending. Grief hits you like a ton of bricks and the future seems bleak. The impact of the trauma becomes primary in your life. Your heart feels heavy from the pain that is very overwhelming and yet it feels empty by the loss and transition of your loved one. Gunfire, a near split-second event changes your life forever. Since February 10, I pray that no other parent will experience this pain and become part of this group.

Nevertheless, "in an average year, 1,455 people die by guns in Ohio (everytown.org)". Unfortunately, more parents have buried children as a result of guns.

I agree that education and preparedness help minimize and ultimately end gun violence. I don't agree that arming teachers is part of that process. As a teacher, I see SB 317 turning passion and dedication to stress, fear, and anxiety while introducing new risks in schools.

Gun deaths in Ohio increased 54% from 2009 to 2018, compared to an 18% increase nationwide representing an increase of 564 gun deaths over this period in Ohio (everytown.org). We're already on the wrong side of this statistic. SB 317 fuels more lives lost by gunfire with more guns in homes and at school.

I urge you to vote against SB317.
Michelle Bell