

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:  
Joan Blackburn

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony. My name is Joan Blackburn. I am an Ohio resident, living in Geauga County. I am writing to share my opposition to SB317.

I am a social worker who has been working in a public school setting for the last 21 years. I have had the privilege of working in two excellent school districts. One of them had a school shooting and continues to deal with the aftermath of this years later. While I applaud the effort to address school safety, this bill significantly minimizes the level of training required to carry a weapon into a school and will make schools less safe. If we want our youth to be safe in schools please explore funding for increased mental health services, school resource officers, community resources for families, youth-led prevention programming, or measures for building safety. These measures allow us to be proactive and identify youth who are at risk for violence towards themself or others.

On any given day, in any school across the state, there are “triggers” that sound like gun shots - something as innocent as balloons popping or a student pounding on lockers. Imagine what can happen if a staff with little training with a gun gets startled, thinking there is a shooting and reacts. The outcome can be disastrous and I do not believe that any of us want to see a teacher or other school staff have to make a decision that could change so many lives in one split second. I’ve seen first hand the heart breaking grief and trauma violence in schools cause please vote against SB 317.

Thank you,  
Joan Blackburn.