

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Melanie Wightman

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.

I am a citizen of Ohio--a retired teacher (35 years in classrooms), current school administrator, and most relevant of all in terms of this issue, mother of an US Army combat veteran. As a mother--grandmother--educator, I strongly oppose SB 317. Arming teachers with concealed and loaded firearms--especially without training them for warfare--is no way to curb potential school violence. Many times, my son and his close friends, who served our nation valiantly in both Iraq and Afghanistan, have explained to me the confusion and trauma that ensue over the dichotomy of being simultaneously a nurturer and wielder of deadly force--and also the potential of tragic error or accident. Unfortunately, their military service often placed them in that nurturer vs. wielder dynamic, and, even with their training and support, they had to switch roles in an instant--and subsequently now deal with considerable and lasting internal conflict.

As Ohioans, we can be more prudent and resourceful in our efforts to protect children--as well as more respectful and considerate of teachers. We need to begin by providing more accessible mental health supports for students and families. I beg you to exert your influence to halt this abhorrent legislation. Thank you for your attention and stalwart service to Ohio and Lakewood.

Cordially yours,
Melanie M Wightman