

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:  
Zack Maaieh

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 Zack Maaieh. I am a senior at Ottawa Hills High School in Toledo. I am hurt and disappointed that the Ohio Senate has yet again decided to consider this dangerous bill. As a student at an Ohio high school, I am terrified by the prospect of having teachers in my school armed with weapons they don't know how to use.

When it comes to education, legislators must be focussed on what's important: providing a safe environment for young people to learn and grow. And this bill will have detrimental effects on creating a productive learning space. Research shows that more guns in schools will increase students' risk of experiencing gun violence. Further, it will create a culture of fear for students of color in particular, who are already disproportionately affected by disciplinary actions. Teachers should be trusted adults for students to look up to—not policemen of our classrooms.

For many students, school is the only place where they can feel safe and be surrounded by caring adults; seeing a gun on a teacher's hip—especially if they aren't fully trained with it—will only put a barrier in that relationship and alienate these students.

When students return to school, they should be focussed on reconnecting with their peers, learning, and having a great school experience—not if they could be the next victim of a tragic shooting by an under trained teacher with a gun.

Gun deaths are on the rise in Ohio—increasing 54% from 2009 to 2018—and our legislators must stop entertaining dangerous gun bills like this and start taking up common-sense gun law reform.

Zack Maaieh