

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:  
Richard Westheimer

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 Dick Westheimer, a 44 year resident of and voter in rural Clermont County, Ohio. I have worked in various professions over the years - none more challenging or rewarding as my 16 year career as teacher of 4th and 5th graders in Cincinnati Public Schools. I write from a place of experience and friend to many current teachers in opposition to SB317.

A teacher's day is a blur of on-task instruction, encountering children with real-time personal trauma and challenges, distractions ranging from fire drills to intrusive PA announcements to an occasional disruptive student, to demands from administrators, to children getting sick in class. Teachers have their days carved up by incessant bells ringing, hall duty, lunchroom assignments, and students and parents needing extra time and attention. This is all part of the job and we teachers learn to accommodate.

But there are consequences - most somewhat trivial in the context of what we are considering today. Yes, it is trivial when we misplace a coffee thermos or favorite mug - left inadvertently left on the copier or by the bathroom or on another teacher's desk or on the bleachers. 99% of the time, these are returned - by a student or adult in the building.

You can tell where I am leading here. Under SB-317, I could carry a loaded, concealed firearm with me into class with as little as 2 hours of training with a flesh and blood trainer - and with no training at all if I chose to open-carry. And yes, most all would keep better track of a loaded weapon than a coffee mug. But "better" - in the context of all the distractions in a teacher's day and the responsibility each of us has to school safety - is not good enough. It is a tragedy waiting to happen.

By the way, schools can be a place of elevated emotions. I am sure all of you here today have gotten angry with your children or coworker. And all of us have seen how a young person's anger can blow up into a short-lived but intensive storm. Imagine that anger with a gun at its ready disposal. Again, it does not take much imagination to see a bad end if SB317 is passed.

Thank you for your time and attention regarding this important issue

Regards  
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Batavia, Ohio