

Testimony on SB 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by
Ariel Miller

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committees,

Thank you for letting me submit this written testimony to you today in opposition to SB 317. My name is Ariel Miller. I am a member of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio's Becoming Beloved Community Leadership Team. I am writing on behalf of all Ohio school children, including my granddaughters – one eight, and one ten years old - who are students in the Forest Hills District, Anderson Township. **By putting guns in the hands of people with virtually no required training, this bill will increase – not reduce - the risk of children being shot in school.** The risk is especially great for children of color.

I am also writing out of concern for you. I don't want you to pass this bill, then turn on the news to hear that an untrained adult, carrying a loaded weapon in school because of your vote, has shot a child. Please prevent this needless danger. Defeat this bill now.

As facilities chair of my parish in Wyoming, Ohio two years ago, I was responsible for developing active shooter protocols, including trying to find ways to protect our preschool and Sunday School children. I attended a briefing by **Wyoming's police chief, who told us it is extremely difficult to shoot accurately when the target is moving, even if a person is a trained police officer.**

This bill poses unacceptable risks to children and school staff. They could be struck by shots intended for the perpetrator. A school staff member who feels threatened and who reacts from a fright or flight impulse could shoot a student during a perceived confrontation.

The Diocese of Southern Ohio Becoming Beloved Community initiative is part of the Episcopal Church's nationwide work to bring about racial justice and reconciliation. As a member of this team, **I am keenly aware of data on the disproportionate rate at which Black students are treated as severe discipline problems in U.S. schools. Students of color are put at greatest risk by arming minimally-trained teachers or staff.** SB 317 terrifies many of my Black friends with children or grandchildren in Ohio schools. If you pass this bill, you will send a disastrous message to Black parents. Why would you increase their distress and anxiety in the middle of a nationwide crisis over the shooting of unarmed Black people – including 12-year-old Tamir Rice of Cleveland?

Current Ohio law requires extensive peace officer training for armed staff in schools. Don't change that. Please, please, drop this bill and focus instead on proposals that will truly increase the safety of our children, teachers, and school staff.

Thank you for reading my testimony. I ask God to bless and guide you in your important work.

Sincerely,

Ariel Miller

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