



GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT  
AND REFORM  
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date August 31, 2020

Name: Meridith M. Niekamp

Address: 6755 Stillhouse Ln  
Dublin, OH 43016

Telephone: 614-787-7287

Organization Representing: private citizen

Testifying on Bill Number: SB 317

Testimony:  Verbal  Written  Both

Testifying As:  Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you a Registered Lobbyist?  Yes  No

Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Sen. Bill Coley, Chair  
Sen. Matt Huffman, Vice Chair  
Sen. Hearcel Craig, Ranking Member

Submitted by:  
Meridith Niekamp  
Dublin, Ohio

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 317.

My name is Meridith Niekamp. I am an Ohio resident, voter and veteran high school teacher. I am also the mother of two teenage daughters who attend Ohio public schools. As a teacher, I am tasked with creating a classroom learning environment in which my students feel safe to take academic risks, to falter, and to try again. A strong teacher education program provided the preparation I needed. As a teacher I have also been tasked with providing physical safety in the event that an armed intruder enters the school building. And though one may never be prepared to face such a situation, I rely on the hours and hours of training and practice my school district has provided as preparation for the possibility of such a horrific moment.

Neither of these two examples involved me carrying a loaded weapon that could destroy human life. Of all the preparation so appropriately required of me to provide safety to my students in so many ways, should *less* preparation be required of me to walk the halls among children and teenagers while carrying a loaded weapon? To face potentially volatile situations in a crowded school building? To be in the presence of kids who, in this stage of development, are by nature curious and sometimes impulsive? Senate Bill 317 would require little to no training of school employees to prepare them for carrying a loaded weapon while working with and among children. Little to no training. By contrast, school resource officers are now required to undergo *more* training for their roles in schools, not less. Now is not the time to ignore the research-based value we have always placed on extensive training and preparation for creating safe school environments, including training for how to work with young people. I urge you to embrace the highest standards when considering the safety of Ohio's children and vote *no on* Senate Bill 317.

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration and again urge you to vote no on Senate Bill 317.