

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Mara McKee

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 in disbelief that Ohio is attempting to pass a bill that will knowingly and purposely endanger the lives of teachers and students. Have we asked ourselves, why do we want this bill? What purpose does it serve? Who is asking for this? The nation's two largest teacher's organizations oppose allowing guns in schools so it isn't the teachers. Today's American teenagers are confronted by violence more frequent and more lethal than faced by any generation and already, there have been numerous incidents where a gun has been discharged by staff on school grounds. There have also been incidents where guns carried into schools were misplaced or stolen and later found in the hands of students.

Schools face new liability when they arm teachers. When several districts in Kansas sought to arm teachers, the insurance companies informed them that they would not insure such a dangerous practice.

There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. This proposition would worsen an already-dangerous situation by gutting the training Ohio law currently requires and allowing teachers to carry guns in schools without extensive safety training. Why are we doing this and who is asking for this?

This is dangerous legislation for Ohio teachers, children and students. This legislation would drastically reduce safety training requirements for teachers who carry loaded handguns inside elementary, middle and high schools.

Please ask yourself how will allowing teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law make our kids safer? The answer is it will not. It will put everyone at greater risk. Under current state law, all armed school employees—including teachers, security guards, and special police—must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. This should be the minimum training we ask of our teachers. Would you bring your child to a surgeon who has had no training? We know the answer to this. As an Ohio constituent, I urge lawmakers to put the safety of their constituents especially the littles among us first and reject SB 317.

Mara McKee