

Testimony on Senate Bill 317  
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:  
Felicity Tao

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 Felicity Tao, a long term resident of Cincinnati Ohio with one child in college and another in the Sycamore Community Schools.

We have witnessed way too many mass shootings in which innocent lives including children were cruelly taken. We as parents found it so difficult to explain why there were so many shootings on the campus, why so many young people have access to assault weapons and why our government doesn't act to enact gun control laws to protect all of us. We know the answer and it's a cruel one - our government has been bought by NRA!

I have no issues for those who wish to own guns and have guns at home to protect themselves. But I hope we and our children have the basic human rights to life and safety in public space and schools where weapons have no place to exist. The only result to have weapons in public spaces and schools is that we will see someone killed!

Teachers are not warriors or police trained to protect the students in a chaotic situation! Teachers are humans and some of them may snap! With a weapon on hand that's an incredibly dangerous situation for our children!

The gun lobby is pushing dangerous legislation in Ohio that would drastically reduce safety training requirements for teachers who carry loaded handguns inside elementary, middle and high schools. Lawmakers should put the safety of their constituents first and reject SB 317.

SB 317 would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law. 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.

But SB 317 would exempt teachers from this requirement, and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 8 hours of concealed carry training (6 of which can be completed online)—or with no training at all, if firearms are not concealed when carried.

There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. SB 317 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.

This bill was introduced after the 12th District Court of Appeals disagreed with a lower court that the Madison Local School District, in Chairman Coley's home county of Butler, could pass a resolution allowing district employees to carry concealed firearms into school safety zones. The court ruled that "exceptions for certain school personnel" included in Ohio Revised Code did not allow the district to give authority to personnel without the proper training by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) or without 20 years of active duty as an officer.

I am strongly opposed to SB 317. It's crazy to even introduce or discuss this bill. Enough is enough.

Sincerely,  
Felicity Tao