

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Connie Griffis

Chair Senator Coley, ViceChair Senator Huffman, Ranking Member Senator Craig and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 317. My name is Connie Bunnell Griffis and I am a resident of Madison Township in Butler County for 33 years. I am a retired school intervention specialist.

I am speaking to you today as a very concerned private citizen and a volunteer for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Founded after the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012, Moms Demand Action is a nonpartisan organization with nearly six million supporters, both mothers and others, gun owners and non-gun owners. (I happen to be a gun owner.) We do not oppose guns or the Second Amendment but rather advocate for the reduction of gun violence through common sense gun safety reforms and education.

As a retired teacher and a former Madison Schools parent, I was very upset about the idea of allowing teachers to carry firearms at school. The very idea of it is completely contrary to everything a teacher is supposed to be — open and approachable, a SAFE person. AND to what a school is supposed to be — a warm and welcoming place. Arming teachers makes for a militarized climate — a place of incarceration. And it is simply much more dangerous to have minimally trained armed teachers in a school than to have only armed SROs.

I came to this “fight” issue when I attended a class reunion planning meeting, and ran into a classmate wearing a Moms Demand Action t-shirt. With her I started attending Moms meetings and signing up to speak at school board meetings. I was against arming teachers to begin, but after doing considerable research and speaking with a number of professionals, I am vehemently against allowing teachers to go armed at school.

I decided to revisit the research about schools with armed teachers when I got this opportunity to speak to this committee again. AND I specifically decided to look for any positive effects or results of schools with armed teachers. BUT I found none/nothing. The research on the effects of schools where teachers go armed is minimal because so

few schools have armed teachers. Mostly the research is limited incidental reports. AND the incidental reports are all negative. In other words every incident is about a bad or dangerous situation involving a teacher or principal with a firearm in a school. Incidents include: the principal who left her Glock in a restroom for a fifth grader to find, the teacher who dropped his firearm when he was dancing with students and did a flip, or the firearm that was dropped and discharged in an empty elementary school building. (I guess we LITERALLY dodged those bullets.) But we can/must not continue to count on dodging bullets in schools.

A recent article from the American Journal of Public Health states that research does find (Berger³) that heightened policing and intrusive security efforts decrease a student's sense of safety; (and)...does not effectively deter crime. (And)...as teachers, school administrators, parents, and policy makers seek to build safe school communities we need a far better understanding of the implications of arming teachers on the school environment, on a child's development, and on student learning outcomes.

Senate Bill 317 imposes no guidelines and no evaluations on school boards, teachers, or administrators. AND there is no accountability. Sending armed teachers into schools is MUCH too dangerous PERIOD, but especially without rules, without extensive training, and without program and mental health evaluations for teachers and students.

As a teacher who was extensively trained and certified in the behavior disordered, I've seen the oppositional student who would view armed teachers as an enticement to violence, NOT A DETERRENT. So many potential school shooters are also suicidal. SO arming teachers becomes a further challenge to them. Have you ever heard of "suicide by cop"? How horrific is the potential story of "suicide by teacher"?!

Look, everyone here wants the same thing. We all want to see an end to dangerous school shootings. But more guns in a school means the probability of more guns being fired and more danger for our children.

Connie Griffis