

Testimony on House Bill 99

House Criminal Justice Committee

April 15, 2021

Submitted by: Joanie Calem

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99.

My name is Joanie Calem and I am a resident of Franklin County. I am also an educator, working in numerous schools throughout the year as a visiting teaching artist. From my past work experience as a full time classroom music teacher, I am well versed in active-shooter drills. Thankfully I have never had to participate in an actual active-shooter event. I can only image how incredibly chaotic and terrifying that would be to be trying to keep a classroom of students safe in such a horrific situation.

According to the current wording of HB 99, teachers would be allowed 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. This bill would do away with that minimum requirement, and drastically reduce the safety training requirements for teachers and school staff who carry loaded guns in schools—from 728 to only 8 hours of concealed carry training.

Guns are not toys, they are more lethal than automobiles. Anyone carrying a firearm needs to have gone through at least this much training. But schools will not be kept safe by arming teachers, no matter how well trained those teachers may be. From my years as an educator, I am certain that having armed teachers on any school premises will create more chaos and fatalities. It will add to the fear, anxiety and mental health crisis that our young people are already grappling with at rising rates. It will not make children feel more safe. And it will not help teachers in any way. Imagine being a teacher knowing that you killed a child because you thought you were going to be helpful.

Please do not vote this bill into law. It is not going to keep Ohio children and educators safe. It would make an already terrible situation worse.

Joanie Calem