

Testimony on House Bill 99  
House Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:  
Sara DeMuch

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 HB 99. I am an Ohio public school teacher and mother of two public high school students.

As a teacher, I am required to make decisions in my classroom that are research based. I am asking that this committee do the same when making decisions that impact my job and the safety of our students and teachers. According to data of gun violence on school grounds, 58% of shooters were associated with the school - either as current or former students, staff, faculty, or school resource officers. When looking at the three mass shooting incidents, 100% of shooters were current or former students. The U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence (2019), found that in 100% of school attackers exhibited warning signs ahead of time. Research also shows that 73% to 80% of school shooters used guns from their home or the home of a family member or friend. There is no data or research that demonstrates a reduction in gun violence due to armed school staff. When making data driven decisions, it is clear that to reduce gun violence on school grounds, we need threat assessment programs, red flag laws, and safe storage laws. This will reduce gun violence, allow schools to intervene early, and provide students the support they need in a time of crisis.

[\(https://everytownresearch.org/report/preventing-gun-violence-in-american-schools/\)](https://everytownresearch.org/report/preventing-gun-violence-in-american-schools/)

When this bill (in the form of SB 317) was heard last legislative session there was overwhelming opposition, as demonstrated through almost 300 testimonies against passage. In contrast, there were only two proponent testimonies and those were given by lobbyists of the NRA and Buckeye Firearms Association. No evidence or research was presented that supports the connection between arming school staff and a reduction in school gun violence. In fact, research shows that firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and teens. Simply having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide by three times and homicide by two times. If teachers have firearms in a classroom, it increases the likelihood that they will be accessed by students. Not only is this type of legislation dangerous, it is opposed by Ohio residents. There is simply not enough information to support implementing such a dangerous strategy.

[\(https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-and-teens/\)](https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-and-teens/)

<https://everytownresearch.org/solution/arming-teachers/>)

Schools are a place of learning where students need to feel safe and respected. At this critical time when we are a year into a pandemic, students' mental health is still vulnerable, as firearm suicide rates have increased among children and teens in recent years, we need our legislators to provide much needed assistance. HB 99 does the opposite and will only make our students and teachers less safe. As an Ohio resident, voter, parent, and teacher, I urge you to put our students and teachers first and not move forward with this bill.

Respectfully,  
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