

Testimony on House Bill 99

Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

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Submitted by:

Mary Dixon

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 Mary Dixon and I am a retired school psychologist, the mother of three adult children, nine grandchildren and 5 great grandsons. I worked in public and parochial schools for over 30 years. As a school psychologist, I both assessed children and counseled them. I also worked closely with teachers and parents, often listening to their concerns.

HB 99 would allow teachers to carry loaded handguns inside elementary, middle, and high schools in Ohio with drastically reduced safety training requirements. Currently the requirements to carry loaded handguns is either the completion of an approved basic peace officer training course or completion of 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. The latter comprises about 728 hours of instruction. HB99 would reduce this instruction time as little as 8 hours. Recently there was a video of one of the teacher training programs which one of the Ohio State Board of Education members attended. After the training there was a practice session. During that session she “shot” a student. HB 99 is an extremely dangerous proposition.

Arming teachers introduces new risks into schools. Allow me to provide some background information from educational and other professional groups. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) opposes arming teachers. Their press release, entitled “NASP Oppose Arming Teachers”¹ written on February 22, 2018 states . . .arming school staff is wrong. Doing so places an unrealistic, unreasonable burden on America’s educators, has the potential to cause more harm from unintentional or inaccurate discharge of firearms and can undermine the sense of safe, supportive learning environments.” The American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National PTA, the American Medical Association, the Major Chiefs Association, and the National Association of School Resource Officers also oppose allowing guns in schools. These concerns are presented with full knowledge that the teachers would receive training before they would be armed.

The statement paper continues “NASP, along with the National Association of School Resource Officers, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the American School Counselor Association, and the School Social Work Association of America, released A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools² outlining the core components of

¹[NASP Opposes Arming Teachers \(nasponline.org\)](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/a-frame)

² <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/a-frame>

school safety.” These components include such things as improving access to school mental health professionals (psychologists, counselors, and social workers) who are accessible in schools and could provide risk assessments for students. Improved coordination and collaboration between school staff, community mental health providers, law enforcement, and other first responders would help close gaps in responding to at-risk students, allowing for intervention and support. This seems much more reasonable and effective than arming teachers.

The National Association of School Resource Officers in a press release on February 22, 2018, entitled “NASRO opposes arming teachers”³ states “NASRO strongly recommends that no firearms be on a school campus except those carried by carefully selected specially trained school resource officers (SROs), who are career law enforcement officers with sworn authority, deployed by employing police departments or agencies in community-oriented policing assignments to work in collaboration with schools.” I do not think that 8 hours of training will give teachers these qualifications. Reasons for this conclusion are listed in the press release: “. . . risks are that an individual with a gun but not a uniform could be mistaken for the shooter, firearm skills degrade quickly and require constant practice under high stress conditions, being able to shoot a gun does not mean an individual is psychologically equipped to shoot another person and discharging a firearm in a crowded school setting is extremely risky.” In addition, as with their parents’ firearms, students may be aware of where and how teachers keep their firearms and how to obtain access.

A national guide published by the federal government’s chief legal law enforcement, public health, education, and emergency management agencies cautioned that ***allowing civilians to carry guns in schools is not a sound security practice.*** The President and Executive Director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which represents 75 police forces from large cities in the USA and Canada say, “The more guns that are coming into the equation, the more volatility and the more risk there is of somebody getting hurt.”⁴ The FBI⁵ found that in 160 active shooter incidents during 2000 and 2013, unarmed civilian interventions ended 13% of the events while armed citizens and off duty police interventions ended only 4%. Thus it would seem that unarmed teachers might be more effective than armed ones.

Our children are our most precious asset. Arming teachers does not seem to be protecting children but rather might be endangering them more. NASP concluded their statement by saying, “Our nations must focus on the approaches that genuinely safeguard the well-being of our children and the school staff who work to educate, empower, and protect them every day.” I do not think that HB 99 would do this.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Dixon

³ [NASRO opposes arming teachers | National Association of School Resource Officers](#)

⁴ [America’s Police Chiefs Call BS on Arming Teachers – Mother Jones](#)

⁵ <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-us-200-2013.pdf>

