

Testimony on House Bill 99
Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:
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Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present testimony in opposition to HB 99. Research shows that guns in schools do not keep children safer but, instead, make them more vulnerable to gun violence. A 2019 Giffords Law Center study found no evidence that the presence of resource officers lessened the severity of school shooting incidents.¹

According to the Giffords study, public-health research *strongly* suggests that armed teachers would not effectively deter violence. Rather, they would make students less safe.

In the March 17th HB99 proponent hearing, a representative from Buckeye Firearms testified. Though he explained that for over twenty years local school boards have determined their safety and security plans, he cited no statistics demonstrating that local plans make students safer.

Rather, research, facts, and data determine how we make students and teachers safer. Research indicates students are less safe with guns in schools. And *if* personnel in schools are permitted to carry, significant weapons training is essential.

The Buckeye Firearms rep emphasized that teachers with a CCW permit can carry a firearm in public but not in a school. But this observation is irrelevant because our discussion concerns mass shootings in schools where “good guys with guns” have never prevented or stopped an incident.

In the 2019 Dayton shooting, nine people were killed and seventeen injured in only thirty-two seconds. Yet many people insist—based on no empirical data—that carrying a gun with a permit will protect them.

According to a July 2015 report conducted by Mount St. Mary’s University and the National Gun Victims Action Council, “If you’re going to rely on a gun for self-defense, you should know how to handle and use it.” The report adds that “safe and effective firearms usage requires mental preparation; legal knowledge; judgmental awareness; as well as firearm expertise, skill and familiarity.”

According to a *Time Magazine* article published shortly after the Dayton shooting, Stanford Law Professor John Donahue, whose research focuses on gun violence and policy, explained that “Unless you’re very well-trained, you usually add more to the body count than you subtract.”

¹ /giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/guns-in-schools/

Finally, his November 2017 *Federalist* article, “If You Choose to Carry a Gun for Self-Defense, Proper Training is Essential,” Kyle E. Lamb, who spent over 21 years with the US Army (mostly in Special Operations), wrote, “If your only firearms education is what the state requires before it issues a carry permit, I can tell you beyond the shadow of a doubt you don’t have enough training.”

I found no data undermining the opinions expressed in these sources.

The second person to testify was a Shelby County sergeant who’s been providing weapons training to teachers since 2013. He described the enhanced training his program provides teachers, including more time on the range and target practice beyond what people receive in basic CCW training. He emphasized the importance of regular follow-up training. But when pressed, he could offer no statistics or data about his program’s effectiveness. When Representative Leland asked whether he believed CCW training was sufficient for teachers, the sergeant said only “for a start.”

Only two proponents appeared in support of HB99, just as two appeared last year to support for SB317—a nearly identical bill passed by the Senate despite the written opposition of over 300 people and organizations. But because of COVID, few opponents were allowed to testify. This time I hope the committee will pay closer attention to Ohioans concerned about our children’s safety and will rely on research to fashion suitable safeguards, including methods for violence prevention and threat assessments and the institution of red-flag laws.²

I am grateful for the opportunity to share my opposition to HB99. I hope you will consider the pain our country is experiencing and the powerful research I’ve sited and conclude that without more training of teachers and other professionals than HB99 requires, more children are likely to die.

²<https://everytown.org/issues/guns-in-schools/#what-are-the-solutions>