

Criminal Justice Committee
Opposition Testimony HB 99
April 12, 2021
Dena Lishing

To the Chairman and Committee Members,

My name is Dena Lishing. I live in Massillon, Ohio and I am employed as a nurse. My 11 year old son, Caleb, was shot and killed by his older brother who got hold of a gun at his Grandfather's house. The gun had been locked up in a drawer but his brother took the drawer apart with a screw driver and then hid the gun. He used it two days later to shoot Caleb.

This is one of the reasons I strongly oppose House Bill 99. Guns should not be in schools where children can get hold of them, period. Even when a teacher thinks they have the gun in a safe place (maybe a locked drawer) an older child with revenge or suicide on their minds can find a way to get it. Or they may use it to commit a crime.

Younger children might find a gun that has been dropped or left laying in plain sight by a busy, distracted teacher. Just this week a 4 year old found an unsecured gun and accidentally shot their 8 month old brother. There's already been many instances where a teacher or school police officer left a gun unsecured or lost control of it and it ended up in the hands of a child. No matter how often you have warned them, "Do not touch a gun", what's the first thing many of them will do? Pick up the gun. Children's brains are not fully developed until their early twenties. They don't have adult reasoning skills. They don't understand that actions have consequences. To have guns in school means kids will, sooner or later, get access to them and this will be tragic. And it's even more likely to happen if teachers are not thoroughly trained in handling guns. A civilian cannot learn to be armed policeman with just eight hours of training! There are countless ways to keep our children safe without our teachers having to act like border patrol. Teachers have a job to do and that is to teach, not be police.

My son was killed by an unsecured gun. And just locking it up does not mean a child can't get it, as in my son's case. It is something I live with

every day. Time does not take that away. It's a hole in my heart that cannot be filled or replaced. It could be your family member it happens to. Everyone thinks "Oh no, not me". I thought the same thing. Now I'm a number along with Caleb and know the pain of loss every day. No family should have to go through this.

Please, you must vote NO on HB 99.

Sincerely,
Dena Lishing