

April 14, 2021

HB 99

House Criminal Justice Committee

1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition to HB 99 regarding firearms training

Dear Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99 which is being brought up for hearings in your committee on Thursday 4/15. My name is Julia Elkus and I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. I am providing written testimony to express my concerns about this legislation, which diminishes school safety and puts the lives of teachers, students and school staff in peril.

I am part of a family of teachers. My brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and three nieces are all teachers. I am part of a community of parents. I have friends who are school administrators, occupational therapists in the Sycamore School system, tutors and school volunteers. I have friends who have had a family member tragically killed in a school shooting. No one I know, not one of these individuals, believes that arming teaching will make schools safer. There is no available data that demonstrates arming teachers adds to the safety of schools, yet much real-life evidence that demonstrates that even the most highly trained police officers and members of the military fire weapons without hitting their intended targets or with tragic error.

HB 99 minimizes training required for teachers carrying concealed weapons in schools. The extraordinary danger of having loaded guns in schools, environments literally filled with children, mandates that anyone carrying a weapon should be trained to the fullest extent possible. Enabling a teacher to bring a firearm into school makes them a defacto armed guard of that school – and they should be trained as such. Anything less is a recipe for unintended tragedy and creates a more dangerous, not a safer, environment for all.

It is the responsibility of this Committee, and all OH legislators, to do everything in their power to make schools safe places. Allowing teachers who have no more than 8 hours of training to carry concealed loaded weapons does anything but that. I have a daughter who has completed 8 *years* of medical training. She has 2 more to go. All so that she serves her patients with care and does no harm. Is there anything that can do more harm in less time than a loaded gun? It is imperative that any individual allowed to carry a deadly weapon into a school for the purported purpose of protecting lives go through the full training required to execute that responsibility safely. Anything less is an abdication of your responsibility to protect the safety and well-being of the citizens of Ohio, including its most vulnerable, our children. I urge Committee members to oppose this reckless and misguided legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

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