

Testimony on House Bill 99
House Criminal Justice Committee
March 24, 2021

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 this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99. My name is Shannon Gallagher. I am a mother of four, a former middle school teacher, a gun owner, and a committed advocate for violence prevention. I became an advocate for common sense gun reform a few years ago as the instances of gun violence in schools rose in our state and around the country. As a mom and an educator, I knew it was my responsibility to become proactive in trying to help make schools physically and emotionally safer, as well as supporting legislation that addresses the growing concerns of violence in our schools. Not for one second during all my years of education classes and teaching, did I ever think I would be here today asking for a no vote on a bill that would give school districts the authority to allow teachers to carry firearms in schools with little training, especially during a global pandemic. I am at a loss for why bills such as Senate Bill 317 and House Bill 99 are continuing to willfully and purposefully be pushed through adding another variable to an already unprecedented and unstable scenario. I have talked with many of my friends and peers who are currently teaching or are administrators in the Greater Columbus Area. The anger, frustration and despair I heard from them was palpable. One started crying saying, "How can they do this to us now?" This educator has been teaching high school in Ohio for decades and she is amazing at it. I have been in her classroom and have seen first hand how much she loves her students and how much they love and respect her. Through her tears she said, "Shannon, I will not continue teaching if this passes."

Even if a teacher is a trained marksperson, this bill would add an unnecessary element of danger that could potentially be devastating not only to the student body but to the staff as well. I have looked into the CCW

training and I noticed that one of the tenements to the training is to always be mindful of your firearm. Most of us educators choose teaching because we want our focus and energy to be on educating and nurturing students as well as being an emotionally and physically safe person in their lives. As a teacher with a class of about 40 students who rotates thru every 55 mins, there is no way I could have or would have wanted to have my attention be on anything other than my students, especially during a pandemic. Ohio teachers, staff, administrators and students are feeling the gravity and stress of how to safely return to school during COVID-19. Please allow them to do their jobs without adding yet another unknown factor to this already overburdened system.

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration and again urge a no vote on House Bill 99.