

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 Sharon Kokot. I am a lifelong Ohio resident and a voter, a former teacher and the mother of a young teacher in Ohio schools. Nothing is more important to me and my daughter Christina than school safety. Like all dedicated teachers, my daughter is committed to the well-being of her students in every way. Student well-being begins with school safety.

HB 99 poses a direct, dangerous and unnecessary threat to that safety. This bill allowing armed teachers and other school personnel into the classroom with **only 8 hours of training for concealed carry and no training whatsoever for open carry of firearms is a recipe for disaster.**

It is difficult to imagine that any teacher is sufficiently prepared to take on an active shooter situation, neutralizing a perpetrator while avoiding hitting any children in the process. Even well-trained police find such situations challenging in the extreme. A teacher with little or no training is far more likely to cause accidental harm than to save anyone under those circumstances.

Possession of a deadly weapon is a grave responsibility, and that responsibility goes beyond confronting an active shooter. If teachers are going to carry guns to school every day, they must be **experts** in practices of safe transport and safe storage. One lapse and dozens of children, if not many more, will have access to those guns. With all the distractions that a teacher faces managing a class of 25 or 30 students, a teacher with a gun in the room had better be hyper vigilant.

We read about accidental shootings by children all the time. We know it happens, even at home. How much more likely that it will happen in a classroom? We know too that there have already been cases of students getting access to teachers' weapons in schools and even of teachers accidentally discharging the guns themselves. With less training, the incidents would only increase. It's no wonder that The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, vehemently oppose arming teachers at all.

Educators are required by Ohio law to undergo years of college education, student teaching, examinations, observations, evaluations and more to be licensed to teach our children reading, science, math or music. We support those stringent requirements because we believe in the critical importance of learning. **Do we seriously care so little about our children's very lives that we are willing to put them in the room with an armed teacher with no training at all in the use of a deadly weapon?** How can this even be a question??? Who is going to want to send their children to school in such a setting?

As we weigh the safety of sending our children to school in the face of covid19, let's not add yet another threat to their health and well-being. Vote no on HB 99.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Kokot