

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 this testimony in opposition to HB 99.

I am a Cincinnati resident, retired business owner, community volunteer and mother of two grown sons. I oppose House Bill 99 because we know it would do nothing to make our children safer at school, and in fact would put them at more risk for gun violence by putting more children in daily close proximity to guns.

Research shows us the way to stop school shootings. It is a holistic approach that combines strong laws at the state level (Extreme Risk, Safe Storage, Background Checks) and intervention at the local level (public awareness of laws, physical security upgrades, and emergency planning among staff). Most importantly, research shows that virtually every school shooter has a connection to the school, which means that by arming teachers we are asking them to be willing to shoot a student or former student. But it also means that we can establish evidence-based threat assessment programs in schools to identify students who may be in crisis, assess the risk, and appropriately intervene without overly relying on discipline or the criminal justice system but by expanding access to mental health services in schools. That is what works.

<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>

What does NOT make our schools safer is arming teachers, especially with little training, as this bill proposes. There is simply no conceivable circumstances in which 8 hours of training, with only a fraction of that being live fire training, can equip a teacher, coach, administrator or any other school employee to successfully respond to an active shooter situation. The report cited above shows clearly that "arming teachers is an ineffective and risky approach to stopping gun violence in our schools. A wealth of research shows allowing staff to carry guns in schools increases the everyday risks to students. This report demonstrates that it is unrealistic to believe that a teacher would be able to protect their students, neutralize a shooter, and not be a risk to themselves and to their students."

I share your desire to make schools the safe havens for our children that they have been and should be. But I urge you to use evidence and data, not emotion and hunches to make these important decisions. I implore you to propose legislation that would actually have the desired effect of keeping our students safe at school. It's not the simple answer, but it is the right one.