

Opponent Testimony on House Bill 99

House Criminal Justice Committee

April 12, 2021

Submitted by: Kate Dieble

Dear 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.

I live in North Canton which is a small town in Stark County. I oppose HB 99. The last time the Ohio Legislature considered Arming Teachers In Schools was last year's SB 317. At that time there was huge opposition to the bill. Ohioans submitted some 250 opponent testimonies vs just 2 proponent testimonies. The proponents did not offer a single piece of evidence supporting the idea of arming school staff. I do not believe there is any less opposition among Ohioans towards HB 99. Experience and research show us that arming teachers just puts both teachers and children at greater risk. It does nothing to stop active shooter situations or other forms of school gun violence.

Changing the minimum amount of training to carrying a gun in school to 8 hours, with just 2 hours of actual time on the firing range, is not a meaningful change between SB 317 and this newer version, HB 99. Everyday, we are seeing even trained officers on our streets make mistakes and shoot innocent civilians. A new "accidental" shooting by police just occurred yesterday in Minneapolis! Current Ohio law requires any armed school personnel to have more than 750 hours of "Peace Officer" training. If even well trained police can make such mistakes, why would we think that a teacher, coach, custodian, or volunteer with just a few hours training is better equipped to handle a gun near a crowd of children? According to the Gifford's Law Center, there have already been more than 90 publicly reported incidents in the last five years where school staff accidentally discharged their guns, sometimes injuring themselves or children, or have allowed their gun to fall into the hands of a student.

Teachers already have a hectic job that requires constant multi-tasking. To expect a teacher to teach but also be an armed policeman is unfair to teachers and unsafe for students. That is why both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association oppose arming teachers in schools. The US Department of Education likewise advises school districts against having guns in schools. There are NO Ohio police organizations that support the idea of arming teachers in schools. They know this will just make their job harder when they arrive at the scene of an emergency.

Please vote "no" on HB 99.

Kate Dieble