

Testimony on House Bill 99
House Criminal Justice Committee
April 15, 2021

Submitted by: Lauren Squires

I live in Columbus in the University District. I am a professor at The Ohio State University; I am a commissioner on the University Area Commission; and I am a mother to two young children, one of whom is a kindergartener in Columbus City Schools. As a parent, a community advocate, an educator, and a resident of Ohio, I am urging you to reject the dangerous HB99—a bill that is being pushed by the gun lobby, and that is I believe against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of everyday Ohioans.

This bill would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law. This means that in my son's elementary school, teachers with barely any training could be carrying deadly weapons in a building full of young children. I don't know very many parents who would be comfortable with this scenario. I don't know very many parents who think that more guns, held by more people with less training, can possibly create a safer environment for our children. In fact, data show that having more guns in schools increases the risk of gun violence.

Here in Columbus, we have had two record years of gun violence. Many of these victims have, to compound the tragedies, been children. Some of the recent shootings have occurred in and very near to my own neighborhood. It has been a heartbreaking, devastating few years for communities across our city and state.

I ask you: Do we really want to create conditions to allow for even more shootings—whether intentional or accidental—where children are the targets, or are caught in the crossfire? I can say unequivocally that I do not. Schools should be safe places, and for many students, they are one of the few safe places they have access to. I hope that, when you think of our children and keeping them safe, you also agree that filling schools with more deadly weapons carried by people with less training will not do that.

Thank you for your time. Please reject HB99.