

# HB99 Hearing Testimony – Edgerton Local School District

Updated 11/2/21

## **History of Armed Staff at Edgerton Local Schools:**

Beginning in the fall of 2010, the Edgerton Local School District armed a History Teacher in an attempt to better protect the students of the school from an active killer. This decision was made as an innovative step to combine two positions into one. The teacher had been working for the school district since 1998 and was sworn in as an officer of the Edgerton Police Department in 2000. The Board of Education and school administration determined that authorizing the teacher to be armed was both a practical and cost effective option for a small, rural district to provide a level of protection similar to larger and more prosperous districts. The board's action created the first School Resource Officer (S.R.O.) in all of Williams County.

## **The Threat:**

In 2012 when a mass killer attacked the Sandy Hook Elementary school, Edgerton Schools discovered a gap in their protective strategy. Their teacher/S.R.O. was out of the district on paternity leave after the birth of his daughter. This left the district exposed with no means to protect their students when it's only protective officer was away.

In the fall of 2013, a plot was uncovered where two students were planning a mass attack on Edgerton Schools. An alert parent notified law enforcement when she discovered her son's attempt to acquire weapons. As more details came to light, the students admitted that before murdering and burning the bodies on their list of over a dozen students, they planned to first eliminate the S.R.O. Once again the school realized that the loss of a single officer would eliminate their only protection in stopping a horrific massacre.

## **The Solution:**

In response to these events, in 2013, the Edgerton Local School District began a process to train and equip a small group of volunteer staff members to provide a multi-leveled back up plan to having a single S.R.O. Volunteers were carefully screened and selected for their maturity, level of experience, and ability to function under pressure. Some had minimal prior experience, while others had extensive, military or other training in firearms. The training and selection process took approximately a year and the result was the development of the A.S.M. or Armed Staff Member program. The program was developed with extensive community input and in close collaboration with local law enforcement. It continued to function effectively until the summer of 2021, when a narrow Ohio Supreme Court ruling ended it.

The Edgerton Local School District would like to respectfully request that the Ohio General Assembly pass House Bill 99 and return control of school safety to the elected school boards and administration at the local level. The need is urgent and small schools across the state, such as ours, remain vulnerable every day that this legislation is delayed. Please return our ability to protect our students and our school community.