

Chairman Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to provide my testimony in opposition to House Sub Bill 248. My name is Kelly Goshe, and I am a resident of Moreland Hills, Ohio. I currently stay home raising my three young children. I am writing today in opposition to HB 248. As much of this bill flies in the face of common sense and responsible gun ownership, there are many reasons to oppose it. I will try, however, to focus on just one. My strongest objection is for the portion of this bill that allows for a person, regardless of training, to carry a loaded firearm into a school.

Two years ago when my oldest daughter had just started kindergarten, her teacher asked for parents to volunteer in the classroom. It was a wonderful opportunity to be involved in my daughter's education and fun to see school from her perspective, so I quickly signed up. On my first volunteer day, things went much as expected -- I wiped tables; I read the children a book; I smiled as I was continually called "Sylvia's mom." What was not expected was the call that came over the loud speakers as I was preparing to leave, "Teachers -- Lockdown." A quick but startled glance between the teacher and her aide told me that this had not been planned. I watched as the teacher quickly walked to close and lock the door and as she efficiently shepherded twenty 5 year olds into the bathroom between her room and the kindergarten room next door. For the next 7 minutes, I hid in a 5x7 bathroom that doubled as a storage closet with 40 kindergarteners and 4 adults. I held my daughter's warm, trusting hand in mine and blew out my cheeks to remind the children to "catch a bubble in their mouths" and stay perfectly silent. I watched as the teachers placed gentle hands on the wiggly-est of their kids urging them to stay still and not bump into the other children packed tightly next to them. A hundred thoughts and feelings ran through my head in those minutes as I tried to display a calm that I did not feel, but not for one nanosecond did I think, "I sure hope a teacher in this building is carrying a gun," and I especially did not think "I sure hope a teacher in this building who has little to no firearms training is carrying a gun." Furthermore, I am certain that none of the 5 years olds in that closet who, in their innocence, remained calm if slightly bewildered by our behavior, would have felt calmer or safer had one of the adults pulled out a gun.

I am fortunate that the lockdown I experienced with my daughter and her classmates was caused by a well-meaning person out for a walk and not someone with more nefarious plans. I shudder to imagine what further confusion and chaos could have been caused by an inexperienced, untrained staff member wielding a weapon.

To be able to act in chaotic and life-threatening situations, police officers undergo hundreds of hours of intense training. And yet, as we saw in the Parkland massacre of 2018, even officers with that specialized training and years of experience sometimes freeze and fail to act. If passed, this bill would allow teachers or school staff with absolutely none of that training or experience to carry a loaded weapon in the school. I am dumbfounded and, frankly, revolted that such an irresponsible, thoughtless bill is even being discussed.

There are many ways you, as our state representatives, can act to deter crime and keep Ohio's citizens and children safer -- this bill is not one of them. I urge you to vote no on HB 248. Thank you.