

Testimony on House Bill 248
Federalism Committee

Submitted by:
Marti Barker

Chair Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to HB 248.

My name is Marti Barker, and I'm a resident of Bellbrook, Ohio. I'm also a retired officer of the U.S. Air Force and life-long, fiercely Independent voter. In recent years I've become involved in advocating for Gun Sense legislation out of deep concern for the safety and well-being of my two teenage daughters...one a freshman in high school, the other in her first year of college.

I got involved with gun violence prevention and school safety after the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018. The evening news came on as I was relaxing on the living room couch still dressed in my fatigues after a long, stressful day at work. My youngest daughter, who was in sixth grade at the time, took notice of the reporting about the tragic incident and commented in the most chilling, matter-of-fact manner: "You know, Mom, if that ever happens at my school, I hope I'm in Ms. [Jones] class because her classroom has a door to outside. But I really hope it doesn't happen while I'm in Mr. [Smith's] class because there aren't any windows or doors in his room." Hearing these words come from my baby girl without any real emotion or concern, landed on me like a ton of bricks. I realized at that moment, unlike me and generations before me, she had not had the luxury of going to school without worrying about her own safety and well-being. She is, in fact, the exact same age as the children who were killed during the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in December 2012...a gut-wrenching episode that ushered in a new "skill" taught in our nation's schools: active shooter drills. These children, who are now freshmen in high school, have lost an innocence and sense of carefree security that breaks my heart.

...And it makes me angry because we, the collective "adults in room," have failed to protect that carefree innocence that we took for granted as children growing up in America. What's worse is I don't think we've taken any meaningful measures that would prevent one of these mass shootings in our schools since they started at Columbine over 21 years ago. To the contrary, we've apparently accepted that school shootings are just the price we pay for living in a free society. So instead of trying to prevent school shootings, let's put a gun in a good guy's hands to attempt to minimize the

collateral damage when they happen.

In doing so, we've signaled to our children, now an entire generation, that we don't have the will to put in place measures that would significantly reduce the likelihood of similar school shootings occurring again. It's no wonder kids these days have so many mental and emotional issues. They see an apathy for their safety and well-being exhibited by those who are supposed to protect them. And that apathy is perceived as a lack of love and compassion...and I get it. Who wouldn't feel unloved and unprotected when we've allowed, virtually unmitigated, for these types of senseless and often preventable (with common sense legislation) shootings to continue? ...If we aren't going to make the changes necessary to drive down the likelihood of active shooter incidents occurring in our schools and universities, we ought not create an opportunity for one by allowing loaded weapons in school safety zones and on college campuses.

Since the Dayton mass shooting in August 2019, Ohioans have been waiting for the legislature to #DoSomething about gun violence. Between 2009 and 2018, gun deaths increased 54% in Ohio compared to 18% nationwide (<https://maps.everytownresearch.org/everystat#Ohio>). HB 248 would do nothing to reduce gun violence and includes many dangerous proposals that have been shown to increase it by encouraging more people to carry guns in more places...more guns = more gun violence.

HB 248 would allow more people to carry a deadly weapon in a school safety zone and reduce penalties for concealed carry violations in a school safety zone. Introducing guns in schools increases the risk of gun violence (<https://everytownresearch.org/issue/guns-in-schools#what-is-the-problem>). Indeed, firearms in school safety zones would seem to introduce the risk of unintended, accidental school shootings, putting children and school employees at increased risk...more guns = more gun violence.

HB 248 would authorize any person—even one without any training in firearms—to carry a loaded firearm into a school if that person has written authorization from the school board. There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools, but this bill would worsen an already-dangerous situation by gutting the training Ohio law currently requires and allowing teachers to carry guns in schools without extensive safety training (<https://tinyurl.com/ETSchoolSafety>). Loosening restrictions on firearms in schools sounds like a recipe for accidental school shootings, increasing the risk of harm to children and school officials...more guns = more gun violence.

HB 248 would force guns on college campuses by prohibiting public universities from restricting concealed carry among students. There is no evidence that allowing guns on campuses reduces crime or makes campuses safer (<https://everytownresearch.org/solution/guns-on-campus/>). To the contrary, more guns = more gun violence.

Just as with SB 317 that was introduced earlier this year by the Government Oversight Committee, HB 248 hinges on the assumption that school shootings are inevitable. And it presumes that having more guns in our schools is the solution—not the problem. It should not be a huge mental leap to understand that more guns = more gun violence. Certainly that appears to be the case in recent months, as we've witnessed a startling uptick in gun violence across the country in tandem with a huge spike in handgun purchases (Ref: Moyer, Melinda W., Early Research Links Coronavirus Gun Sales Surge to Increased Shootings, <https://www.thetrace.org/2020/07/coronavirus-gun-sales-increased-shootings-study/> ; Levine, Phillip B. and McKnight, Robin, Firearms and accidental deaths: Evidence from the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6368/1324.abstract> ; Moyer, Melinda W., Will a Gun Keep Your Family Safe? Here's What the Evidence Says; <https://www.thetrace.org/2020/04/gun-safety-research-coronavirus-gun-sales/>).

In closing, I ask that you please oppose HB 248 and instead propose measures that would effectively reduce the likelihood of active shooter incidents occurring in the first place. These include universal background checks, limits to magazine capacities, extreme risk protection laws, robust mental healthcare and, yes, even bans on military-style assault weapons.

Marti Barker

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: November 17, 2020

Name: Marti Barker

Are you representing: Yourself Organization _____

Organization (If Applicable):

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 248

Specific Issue:

Are you testifying as a: Proponent _____ Opponent Interested Party _____

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require?

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I oppose House Bill 248.

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