

Testimony on House Bill 248  
Federalism Committee

Submitted by:  
Sharon Kokot

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 Sharon Kokot. I am a lifelong Ohio resident and a voter. I am a former teacher and the mother of a young teacher in Ohio schools. Nothing is more important to me and my daughter than school safety. Like all dedicated teachers, she is committed to the well-being of her students in every way. Student well-being begins with school safety.

HB 248 poses a direct, dangerous and totally unnecessary threat to that safety. This bill, allowing anyone authorized by a school board to carry a loaded weapon into a school safety zone with little or no training, is a recipe for disaster.

It is difficult to imagine that any teacher is sufficiently prepared to take on an active shooter situation, neutralizing a perpetrator while avoiding hitting any children in the process. Even well-trained police find such situations challenging in the extreme. A teacher without sufficient training is by far more likely to cause accidental harm than to save anyone under those circumstances.

Possession of a deadly weapon is a grave responsibility, and that responsibility goes beyond confronting an active shooter. If teachers are going to carry guns to school, they must be experts in practices of safe transport and safe storage. One lapse and dozens of children, if not many more, will have access to those guns. With all the distractions that a teacher faces managing a class of 25 or 30 students, a teacher with a gun in the room had better be hyper vigilant. That's impossible under normal circumstances. What about now, while teachers in addition to trying to teach are preoccupied with the "Who isn't wearing a mask? Who is using hand sanitizer? Have the desks been sanitized?" Can we reasonably add, "Oh yes and while I'm teaching, monitoring and sanitizing, I'm keeping an eye on my gun"? The idea defies reason.

We read about accidental shootings by children all the time. We know it happens even at home. How much more likely that it will happen in a classroom? We know too that there have already been cases of students getting access to teachers' weapons in schools and even of teachers accidentally discharging the guns themselves. With less training, the incidents would only increase. It's no wonder that The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, oppose arming teachers at all.

Teachers are required by Ohio law to undergo years of college education, student teaching, examinations, observations and more to be certified to teach our children reading, science or math. We support those stringent requirements because we believe in the critical importance of learning. Do we care so little about our children's very lives that we are willing to put them in the room with an armed teacher with no training at all in the use of a deadly weapon? How can this even be a question??? Who is going to want to send their children to school in such a setting?

HB 248 would heighten the danger in schools additionally by allowing 18-year-olds to obtain a concealed carry license and purchase a gun. This means that high school seniors are more likely to try to bring guns to school. Even outside of the school setting, do we seriously want less-mature individuals carrying deadly weapons in our midst? And what about our college campuses? Are we going to let 18-to-20-year-olds, along with everyone else, carry guns there and take away university administrators' right to have a say in the matter?

The HB 248 substitute bill is a Trojan Horse presented under the guise of expanding rights for antique gun owners. As written now, it promotes a guns-everywhere approach that has been shown to increase violence and death. It attacks the safety of our children and our teachers at all grade levels and will exacerbate the increasing level of gun homicide in Ohio. I ask you to do your duty to protect Ohioans. Vote "no" on HB 248.

Sharon Kokot

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: November 17, 2020

Name: Sharon Kokot

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title:

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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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