



OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

State Representative Thomas Hall

House Criminal Justice Committee
March 4, 2021
Sponsor Testimony HB 99

Thank you Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, and Ranking Member Leland for the chance to testify on House Bill 99 today. School safety is a passion of mine because my family experienced firsthand a school shooting just over 5 years ago. I remember all too well the day of February 29th, 2016. Arriving for classes at Miami University, I was ready for a normal day. After sitting down for my statistics exam, my phone buzzed a few times, this was a good reminder to turn it on silent. After it continued to buzz, I couldn't focus on my exam anymore and quickly felt embarrassed with much of the class noticing my disruption. The calls and texts were for good reason. I will never forget the call from my mother on that day. The lives of many families, including my own, in my hometown of Madison Township, in Butler County will never forget that day.

As I stepped away from my exam my mother's words, "Shooting at Madison", still sit with me to this day. Immediately I thought of my Father, who at the time was the school's only armed school resource officer. Luckily, my Father who had just left the school's lunchroom, was able to rush back to the lunchroom in 8 seconds to chase the shooter out of the building and off the property where the offender was later apprehended. I will never forget the conversations that ensued days after, and hearing what the administration saw that day in the lunchroom. What could have been an even more tragic event, was ended by my Father being there.

In the days following the school shooting, many safety measures were put into place by the school board and administration. Some of those measures, but not all, included, adding a second school resource officer, metal detectors, additional handheld radios (going from 0 to 50 radios), applied 3M protective window film, and arming of some of the teachers in the various locations of the school.

This legislation has already gained support from several of our colleagues. My bill is quite simple.

Educators should have the ability to carry firearms in the classroom to protect students and staff. In my bill, we simply give local control to allow for the local school boards and local governing bodies to decide what amount of training is necessary to allow teachers to carry a firearm in a school safety zone.

This revised version has come together after many collaborative conversations about school safety.



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Previously, SB 317 from the 133th General Assembly, removed the requirement for a school employee to complete Ohio Peace Officer Training in order to carry a firearm onto school premises. My version now revises the training requirements to be the same as a concealed carry permit holder.

This legislation is very important to my district specifically and for the many districts in this great state that currently have this practice in place. This bill would also allow school boards to set further requirements, beyond the concealed carry permit training, for an employee to carry a firearm onto school grounds. Not only do we give our local schools back the control of what they deem to be enough training to arm an employee, the language in this bill further explains that this requirement only applies if that person is not being employed as a special police officer or security officer.

In conclusion, School safety for our students and educators is a top priority for me in Columbus, I urge your support and passage of this bill.

Thank you for your time today, I would be happy to take questions at this time.