

Thank you, Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and the other members of this Committee for permitting me the opportunity to testify in support of HB99 today. My remarks today will be brief because truthfully it is outrageous that we are being forced to clarify longstanding law because out of state actors are attempting to roll back our school safety measures and overturn the will of the Ohio legislature via the court system. The existing law which HB99 addresses has served the citizens of Ohio well for at least 13 years, and has during this time allowed our schools the ability to provide best of class safety and security for the students and school staff.

The ability of local school boards to authorize individuals to carry firearms on school grounds with school board oversight has been a part of many school's safety and security plans going back to when the legislation was enacted over 10 years ago. Despite the clear language of ORC 2923.122 and 109.78, along with opinions from the current and previous Ohio Attorney Generals and decades of safe and effective practice out of state lawyers have succeeded in finding a court to rule that the Ohio General Assembly was not clear enough when enacting these sections. HB99 provides that clarity without changing Ohio law in any substantive way.

A recent 12<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals decision has injected a level of absurdity into school safety plans that demands this legislature to clarify. The court's erroneous conclusion was that previous General Assemblies wished to allow Ohio schools the ability to authorize you, me or other members of the public the ability to carry a firearm on school grounds for personal protection and the protection of others after obtaining an Ohio Concealed Handgun license. However, if the same school wishes to authorize a school administrator, teacher, coach or other staff then that person suddenly requires an additional 700 hundred hours of police academy training. Remember, the Ohio General Assembly has already authorized this same school staff member to carry a firearm every other hour of the day while in public with their children, family and friends but if their school wants to permit this while they are in our schools, they must have months of additional study on gang awareness, traffic control, police photography and surveillance training. The court's ruling is absurd and must be corrected.

In short, the Ohio General Assembly previously provided Ohio schools the ability to enact appropriate safety measures and to determine what practices best serves their individual communities with regards to authorizing firearms on school grounds. This bill doesn't remove training requirements as has been erroneously reported by some media sources. It simply clarifies to the courts that safety decisions need to be in the hands of the local officials who best know their own unique situation and needs. HB99 should be enacted swiftly to ensure they can continue to serve our children and communities appropriately.

Thank you for your time and for you concern for the safety of Ohio's school children, staff and our communities.

Joe Eaton