

Good morning Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 99 today.

My experience supports that schools and children are safer when a school district has the authority to authorize specific individuals who meet their criteria. I was not hired as a police officer, and my understanding of their training is that very little of it pertains to stopping an active killer. Requiring school staff to attend law enforcement training covering all the other law enforcement duties that have nothing to do with school safety makes little sense. We can't afford to waste resources on things that do not enhance safety or education.

The safety of our students and staff should be the highest priority of the school district. But because of our inability to adequately fund schools, we must be creative and judicious in our spending to maximize the return on our investment to try to increase the security in our school facilities to keep our students and staff as safe as we are able.

During active killer situations, staff members have bravely died trying to save students. Why not let them have a chance to live after they have successfully and quickly ended an active killer situation.

My school district has 2 armed resource officers that are split between three schools and 5 buildings that are 4.3 miles apart. It would take at least several minutes for those officers to respond to a situation at the school where they are not located at the time of need.

Armed staff add to the level of security while costing a fraction of the salary of a law enforcement officer. To expect the armed staff member to go through the police academy is ludicrous. There are a multitude of subjects that are taught at the academy that have absolutely nothing to do with response to a potential active killer situation. I say potential because there have been many instances where staff members have stopped potential situations before they happened, because they were there and willing to help. The way we save lives is by stopping a killer as soon as possible and rendering first aid if necessary. The quicker the threat is neutralized, the less chance there is for dead and injured students and staff.

The surest way to have trained, willing, and able armed staff is by clarifying existing law that local school districts have the authority to decide if anyone has earned the right to be authorized, who those individuals are, what training they must obtain, and what ongoing training is required to maintain that authorization. That has worked extremely well in my district as well as many others in the state for many years. I urge the passing of HB 99.

Thank you.

Richard Wanner

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