

Opposition Testimony: HB 99-Arming Teachers
Criminal Justice Committee
Submitted by Leslie Baird

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99.

As a retired public school professional, I oppose HB 99 because it is unsafe for students. To allow community members, paid personnel or school staff to carry a loaded gun without adequate training is a terrible safety plan. All in, this bill requires 28 hours of initial training + 2 hrs. of hand gun training and 2-4 hours of annual follow up training. This is hardly enough training to allow someone to carry a loaded deadly weapon around our children. Compare this amount of training to the current standard of 700+ hours required for Peace Officers and you see my point. The New York City Police Dep't reported that their highly trained officers see their shooting accuracy decrease significantly in stressful shooting situations. A barely trained person with a few hours training is more likely to hit an innocent student or staff member than to be able to "take out" a school shooter. Although school shootings are terrifying, they are actually only a small percentage (about 1%) of child shootings in our country. In Ohio, an average of 113 children and teens die by guns every year. About 63% of these deaths are homicides, 38% are suicides, and the rest are accidental shootings or undetermined causes. Of course we want to stop the tragedy of school shootings but there is no evidence that poorly trained civilians are effective in stopping an armed shooter situation. On the other hand, according to the Gifford Law Center, there have been more than 90 publicly reported instances of mishandled guns at schools in which staff accidentally fired their guns or allowed their gun to fall into the hands of a student. This bill will create more dangerous situations than it resolves.

I urge you to make the sensible decision and reject HB 99 in all its forms.

Thank you,
Leslie Baird