

Testimony against HB99  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
November 2, 2021  
by Shela Blanchard

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 HB 99. My name is Shela Blanchard, and I am a very concerned citizen from Columbus, Ohio.

This has been another exhausting year; at every corner the gun lobbyist continue to push dangerous gun legislation in Ohio. In an effort to create and solve a problem that doesn't exist, their tactics are quite persistent. Meanwhile, Ohio families are left to deal with two pandemics; covid-19 loss of a family member and the other pandemic a drastic rise in gun violence.

Easy access to guns on our streets, the ability to purchase from a gun show, internet or other means without a background check has left families and communities devastated. My family and friends are disappointed once again. We voted for a safer community for our children. Instead, we receive monthly notification of another bill being introduced or re-introduced at the statehouse, which would not keep our children or communities safer.

We discuss why are firearms such a huge topic at the Ohio statehouse? As mothers and fathers bury their children daily from the increase in gun violence across the state even more so, right here in the capital. Why are they not addressing safe storage of firearms which has proven to save life? Why are they not addressing the issues of guns being easily accessible on the streets of Ohio? Why are they not addressing the issues of their constituent's lack of affordable housing? Food disparity and access to quality health care? Why are they not addressing a living wage so that families can get out of poverty? Why are they not addressing equal and fair quality education for children? Our questions continue...why do they continue to try to make it easier for people to kill each other? Is it a conspiracy? Whatever happened to public safety not deputizing? I have no answer for them or for myself.

Once again, I am here to oppose the bill before us, HB99 arming teachers in the classroom.

These bill(s) sub-bill calling to arm persons with insufficient training continue to show up in both houses of our legislature, yet the research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are. I want to believe you all agree, we all want to protect our children. This bill will do completely the opposite.

Research has proven an armed teacher is much more likely to shoot a student bystander or be shot by responding law enforcement than to be an effective solution to an active shooter in a school. An armed teacher cannot, in a moment of extreme duress and confusion, be expected to transform into a specially trained law enforcer. There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. This creates more of an opportunity for unintentional shootings to occur. There have already been incidents of guns being stolen from teachers' desks or even grabbed from an armed person's holsters and winding up in students' hands. I can definitely see that occurring again. Most teachers do not believe arming teachers will make their students safer.

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. Just last week we learned of the death of a videographer by Alec Baldwin who was unintentionally shot on set. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned and cared for they can misfire. Student safety is critical. When a child gets their hands on a gun and unintentionally injures or kills themselves or others, the physical and psychological trauma is long-lasting, affecting the victims and their families, the child who accessed the gun and the extended communities of both.

Our children deserve better, they should not and cannot continue to be used as pawns in a political game of power, manipulation, and fear-mongering. This game of politics should have no place in our Ohio Statehouse. Aren't you tired yet? We are, yet we will continue to fight for a safer community for all. I am here today to stand on behalf of my family, friends, community and all the others that oppose this legislation. This is not a chess game or a notch of confidence for delusional propaganda. Children's lives are at stake. One day they will grow up and sit where you are sitting right now and wonder what happened and why.

The legislation the 134th General Assembly has provided regarding armed personnel in schools falls short yet again of providing adequate training in schools. I ask that you please vote no on this dangerous bill that will result in the shooting deaths of innocent children.

Thank you,

Shela Blanchard  
Columbus, Ohio

Brenan M. Most US teachers oppose carrying guns in schools. Gallup. March 16, 2018. <https://bit.ly/2MPTRV5>.  
[Most U.S. Teachers Oppose Carrying Guns in Schools \(gallup.com\)](https://bit.ly/2MPTRV5)