

Testimony on House Bill 99
Criminal Justice Committee
Date: 11/1/2021
Submitted by: Joan Calem

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this written testimony in opposition to HB 99. My name is Joanie Calem. I am an educator and am very concerned about some of the bills that the current Ohio legislature is trying to pass that will endanger students and teachers.

The General Assembly states in HB99 "that the purpose of the provisions is to expressly overrule the decision of the Ohio Supreme Court in *Gabbard v. Madison Local School Dist. Bd. of Edn.* (R.C. 109.78(E)). This is a very alarming statement, admitting that the Ohio Legislature wants to overrule the Ohio Supreme Court. How is this okay in a democracy?

This bill claims to support arming teachers so that they will be able to stop an active shooter in a school but allowing teachers to be armed in schools will most definitely lead to tragedy. The gun lobby has a very blatant financial motivation to pass this bill, but please look at what data tells us: criminal background checks, red flag laws, safe storage laws, additional physical security upgrades, emergency plans among staff and access to school mental health professionals are the ways to increase safety in schools, not insufficiently training teachers to carry arms in schools. Setting teachers up with 18 hours of education and two hours of live fire training is completely insufficient. It will never keep students safe but will certainly add to the body count. The research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are.

<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>

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. Unintentional shootings occur. There are documented incidents of guns being stolen from teachers' desks or even grabbed from armed person's holsters and winding up in students' hands.

Student safety is critical. Mass shootings in schools are a terrible reality that parents and children should never have to worry about. 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. I hope you would agree we all want to protect children. Thank you.