



House Criminal Justice Committee
Written Opponent Testimony Sub. HB 99
Presented by Melissa Cropper
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November 4, 2021

Chair LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, and ranking member Leland and member and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, higher education staff and faculty, and public employees. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on amendments to HB 99.

We do not support arming teachers or staff. Fully and fairly funding our public schools would allow more school districts to hire appropriately trained School Resource Officers, without watering down current law.

In April, when we previously testified in opposition to HB 99, we identified some simple and common sense changes that would mitigate the very dangerous risks this legislation poses. We are disappointed that the substitute bill did not address a single area of concern, but instead actually made the bill more reckless.

We again urge you to include these minimum standards in HB 99 to protect Ohio students:

- **Transparency:** Parents should know if teachers or staff carry firearms in their child's school. Teachers and staff should know if their colleagues are carrying guns. This notification should not detail which staff are carrying firearms, so that an active shooter does not target them.
- **Oversight:** The legislation should direct Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) to develop the training curriculum and length. They have the expertise needed to ensure that armed teachers and staff can properly evaluate and de-escalate situations rather than shooting first and asking questions later. It is absurd to have an 18 hour maximum on training before getting permission to bring a loaded gun into school every day.
- **Psychological testing:** This commonsense safeguard would help parents, teachers, and staff have confidence in this program.

Sandy Hook teachers, who suffered extreme trauma from a school shooting that left 20 elementary school students and six staff members dead, made recommendations on policies to prevent more mass casualty school shootings. They rejected the idea of arming teachers.

It is ironic that at the same time many legislators are seeking to micromanage curriculum and reading assignments, there is also the effort to pass HB 99. Educators are being told we are not trusted to decide what to teach in the classroom, a job we study for and are licensed to do, but we are trusted to have loaded guns around children with minimal training.

Please stop and listen to the educators and parents who have grave concerns about this legislation. We all want to keep our kids safe in school. Rather than passing a one-sided bill and opening the floodgates to allow more and more guns in school, each of which can be deadly if it gets into the wrong hands, you have an opportunity to bring people together and find consensus around improving school safety. Please take that opportunity.