

House Criminal Justice Committee
Opposition Testimony Sub Bill HB 99
Who May Carry Guns In Schools
Submitted by: Erin Dickinson
Nov. 2, 2021

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. My name is Erin Dickinson and I strongly oppose HB 99. I am the mother of 4 young boys and my husband and I live in Broadview Heights, OH.

This bill would “authorize” people who are essentially vigilantes, inadequately trained individuals, not employed by the school district as security guards, to conceal and carry dangerous loaded weapons in our schools. This reflects a disturbing and dangerous trend in our country: state and local government agencies abdicating their duty to protect citizens or enforce certain laws and handing those powers to civilians instead. Right now, The US Supreme Court is grappling with this problem in the Texas abortion ban case. The Texas legislature “authorized” citizens with no standing in an abortion situation to sue patients or health providers. We watched images of Kyle Rittenhouse and violent Jan. 6th insurrectionists who took the law into their own hands. If HB 99 is passed, our children and school staff will be victims of this vigilante movement.

Both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association oppose arming teachers or civilians in schools.[1, 2] The US government’s chief legal, educational and law enforcement agencies all find that arming civilians in schools is “not a safe security practice”. [9] By reducing the number of hours of training that a person must have to be armed in schools from 730 to a mere 28 (with a few hours annual “touch up”), this bill would surely cause more avoidable shootings than it would prevent.

Sub Bill HB 99 does not exclude teachers or school staff from being designated by School Boards as “persons authorized” to carry arms in school safety zones, it simply avoids mentioning them. So in many schools,

this bill will result in teachers carrying guns in schools with minimal training, something parents and educators have made clear they strongly disapprove of. Parents will have no legal recourse to find out whether teachers are carrying weapons since the bill simply requires schools to acknowledge that “ the board or governing body has authorized one or more persons to go armed within a school...”

Sub Bill HB 99 is especially dangerous for students of color and students with disabilities. Black students make up about 16% of America’s student population but they experience school shootings at twice that rate. [7] Black and brown Americans are 5 x more likely to be shot by police than white Americans. A study at University of Colorado (2005) found that subjects reacting to a potentially armed person would shoot black individuals faster and more often than whites.[7]

Students with learning differences such as Autism, ADD or Speech/Language and Hearing disabilities will also be at great risk. They may not understand or respond when an armed person orders them to do something. Teenagers roughhouse and fight sometimes. Twenty-some hours of training is not going to transform someone from a well-intentioned gun enthusiast into a trained law enforcement officer who can de-escalate chaotic situations and make good life and death decisions. Because that’s what’s involved for our children here...life or death.

The program outlined in Sub Bill 99 appears to be the same as the “Faster” program sold by Buckeye Firearms. Whose interests are being served here? Ohioans have been asking you to close background check loopholes and pass Red Flag laws for several years. You have not even introduced them. Yet last week the NRA and local gun lobby groups (as well as a gun lobbyist from Arizona, it must be noted) came to town and Bingo! The Government Oversight Committee referred Permitless Carry onward and this committee seems to be rushing headlong to put inadequately trained people with loaded guns next to our children.

The purpose of HB 99 is not to save children’s lives; it is an attempt to overrule a court decision. 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).) In this recent case, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of parents who sued their Ohio school district for arming teachers or other personnel in their school without adequate training.

Please listen to Ohio parent, not the gun lobby, and vote NO on HB 99!

Respectfully,
Erin Dickinson

1. AFT. Call On Lawmakers To Adopt Proven Strategies To Make American Schools Safer. Release: Monday, February 11, 2019

2. "AFT, NEA: Arming Teachers Won't Keep Schools Safe, Dec. 20, 2012, available at: <http://www.nea.org/home/53943.htm>

3 Rostker BD, Hanser LM, Hix WM, et al. Evaluation of the New York City Police Department firearm training and firearm discharge review process. Rand Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG717.html>. Published 2008

4. Brokemole J, Witt J. Journal of Experimental Psychology. Cited at <https://www.minnpost.com> 2012/03

5. Children/teenage deaths: CDC, WONDER, 5 year average 2015-2019 ages 0-19. Cited by EveryStat.org, updated Jan., 2021.

6. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/every-incident-of-mishandled-guns-in-schools/> Last updated SEPTEMBER 8, 2021.

7. The latest school safety proposals ignore the experiences of students of color

Why calls to arm teachers have been met with fear in black and brown communities.

By P.R. Lockhart, VOX, Mar 2, 2018, 1:50pm EST

8. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/disproportionality-in-student-discipline-connecting-policy-to-research/>

9. U.S. Department of Education, et.al, "Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans, 2012, available at: http://rems.ed.gov/docs/REM_S_k_12_Guide_508.pdf