



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

**OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
House Criminal Justice Committee
Substitute House Bill 99 Opponent Testimony
November 4, 2021**

Good morning, Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee. My name is Scott DiMauro. I am a high school social studies teacher from Worthington with 16 years of classroom experience, and I currently serve as President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of approximately 120,000 members of the Ohio Education Association (OEA), thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Substitute House Bill 99. To recall, I also testified in opposition to the as-introduced version of the bill in April 2021. The bill would exempt a “person authorized to go armed within a school safety zone” from satisfactorily completing an approved basic peace officer training program and instead creates a new set of requirements.

The safety of Ohio’s students and educators are our utmost priority. The currently effective legislative policy adopted by OEA members states that teachers and other school employees should not be asked to serve a dual role as educators and school safety personnel armed with weapons.

Training Requirements

Substitute House Bill 99 represents marginal improvement to the as-introduced version of the bill. We are pleased that the measure requires the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) to create the training enumerated under the bill. However, OEA remains concerned and opposed to the training hour requirements in the bill. Substitute House Bill 99 would prescribe state training requirements at a maximum of 20 hours of initial training and 4 additional hours to be completed annually. For comparison, in the state of Ohio you need 200 hours to be a licensed nail technician. OEA believes this level of firearms training remains inadequate and will ultimately jeopardize the safety of students and staff.

Of the states that explicitly allow school personnel to be armed, most require staff to complete a curriculum established by the state’s police officer standards and training commission, and many of these training requirements are substantial. For example, Florida requires 132 total hours of comprehensive firearm safety and proficiency training conducted by instructors certified by the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. Texas, North Dakota, and South Dakota all require 80 hours.



While we may disagree on whether arming staff is a suitable solution for responding to violence in a school, OEA believes an appropriate course of action for the legislature is to prescribe clear, robust state minimum training requirements for “other personnel” authorized to carry weapons on school grounds. Therefore, OEA recommends that the bill further be amended to remove references that the training created by the OPOTC should not exceed 20 hours of initial training and 4 hours of annual training. OPOTC should not be boxed in by the legislature on hour requirements that they may not see as sufficient for adequate training.

Transparency

Substitute House Bill 99 requires a board of education or governing body of a school to notify the public that they have authorized one or more persons to go armed within a school of the board or governing body. However, the bill does not expressly state how often the governing body should notify the public and if school districts who have already authorized this policy are required to notify the public. Because residents and students change within a district, OEA requests this provision be amended to require annual notification to the public, including notification from school districts who have already made this authorization, and be posted on the district’s website.

In conclusion, OEA remains opposed to Substitute House Bill 99 as currently written. We urge the legislature to require rigorous training standards, created by safety experts, for school employees authorized to be armed within a school safety zone.