



Sheriff James R. Frye

## SHELBY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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November 2, 2021

Ohio House of Representatives  
Criminal Justice Committee

Dear, Chairman Jeff LaRe, D.J. Swearingen, Vice Chair David Leland, Representatives Cindy Abrams, Willis E. Blackshear, Jr. Sedrick Denson, Tavia Galonski, Adam C. Miller, Phil Plummer, Sharon A. Ray, Jean Schmidt, Bill Seitz, Andrea White,

My name is James R. Frye, Sheriff of Shelby County, I am writing you in support of and also to clarify the misconceptions about armed teachers in local schools as you hear testimony in regard to HB 99.

Ten (10) years ago, after the Chardon High School shooting, then Shelby County Sheriff John Lenhart and Sidney City Schools Superintendent John Schue, both felt we were lacking in the area of protecting our children while in school if in case of an active shooter. With this in mind, they sat out to develop a program that would train teachers who volunteered to be on armed teacher response teams in each of the Sidney City school buildings.

As this was a new concept, they had to start from the ground up. They began to develop the program and as to how they envisioned it going ahead and working. Policies and procedures were developed, and all teachers who wanted to take part in the program were vetted, and their training began.

The Sheriff's Office developed a program to train the armed teacher response team members, that training was specific to teaching each member how to respond to an active shooter in a school setting, the training was called PARATUS.

Each person (teacher or faculty member) was trained through the Shelby County Sheriff's Office's PARATUS training. This training was administered, by a certified Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy instructor, who also is a firearms instructor with over 25 years of service. The teachers received the same firearms training that a law enforcement officer would receive during their Law Enforcement academy. Their training included basic firearms safety, handling, and manipulation as outlined in the basic police academy. We then added to this training similar techniques that are taught to law enforcement for single and multiple officer response to active shooter.



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The deputies who train the teachers are all certified as instructors in either the RAIDER (a private firearms company program for teaching officers to respond to active shooter incidents) or the Homeland Security, who developed and taught LASER (Law enforcement Active Shooter Emergency Response) program. These techniques include hallway movement, such as negotiating corners, intersections, stairways and handling threats from the threshold and partial room entry.

Once the teams were in place, they went through more training on “response to an active shooter” and how to conduct themselves and trained in their respective buildings (schools). These regular bi-monthly or monthly training sessions, depending on the school, includes range sessions, movement practice and scenario training. The teams are supervised by a Deputy assigned to the school and they train with live fire each month. Their training is recorded, and those training files are kept at the Sheriff's Office, just as an agency would keep their Deputies/Officers training files.

Unlike Madison School District, who allowed a teacher who was a CCW holder to carry a firearm on their person while in the school, our policy is that no teacher will carry a firearm while teaching and they would only possess a firearm if there was an active shooter situation. The firearms are in an undisclosed location, only known to the teacher response team members in a biometric safe. The safe can only be opened by the person who is assigned that weapon. Also, with the safe is a vest that identifies the teacher as an armed teacher response team member, which will reduce the chance of a friendly fire incident and allow responding law enforcement to know their response team members. Another deterrent is signage that says that the building is protected by a Deputy Sheriff and an armed teacher response team.

I totally understand the issues that all of the opponents raise, I feel they are based on the teachers just carrying a firearm with only the number of hours of training that is required for a CCW permit and that they are carrying on their person while at the same time teaching our children, with minimal training.

Erin Gabbard, one of the parents who sued the Madison School District said in a prepared statement, “Like any parents, we just want our kids to be safe. The Madison school board armed minimally trained staff, one of whom even failed the accuracy test multiple times. Once this ruling is implemented, parents will at least know that the teachers who carry firearms in our schools are properly trained, as required by state law.”



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I agree with this and that the armed teachers should be properly trained, but to require the number of hours that is needed to become a Law Enforcement Officer is not practical, as they are not acting as Law Enforcement Officers.

One opponent said that "Educators are not responsible for armed resistance or working in an armed workplace by people that are possibly not trained well and or have no experience with children." All of our armed teacher response team members are all educated teachers whose main responsibility is to teach our children, to say they have no experience with children is absurd. To say they are not responsible for armed resistance, go tell one of those teachers that and you will hear them reply that they are not going to crawl into a ball and hide as an active shooter kills innocent children under their watch.

I compare these teachers to our other public safety professionals, as they volunteered to join and train to be on the armed teacher response teams, because they want to not only instruct our children, but they also want to protect them even if it means giving up their own lives. These team members are very resolute individuals who have agreed with their respective school boards to put the training hours in, so that they are proficient with a weapon and tactics to stop an active shooter and to protect lives.

Their trainers say that these members, when compared to my very own deputies, are better trained and train with their firearms more than a full-time deputy. As a full-time Deputy under the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission only has to qualify twice a year This is the dedication these armed teacher response team members show day in and day out.

Recently, in discussion with a local Superintendent, he said that "I would rather be charged and tried in a Court of Law, than to sit back and do nothing if an active shooter incident was to occur". This is the mind set of all the members on the armed teacher response teams of our schools that continue their armed teacher response teams.

Here in Shelby County, we are a rural County, and our schools are spread out throughout the County. In the case of an active shooter, our only response is an SRO, if the school has one, and the armed teacher response teams. I know by the time my Deputies get to the school, the shooting will be over, and many lives will be lost. Response teams are the only way to ensure in case of an active shooter, that lives are saved. Our children are our most valuable asset, and we need to do all we can possibly do to keep them safe.



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I wholeheartedly believe that we have a model program in Shelby County. We have trained those teams of teachers to be dependable and proficient with what is needed to accurately discharge a weapon to protect innocent lives and to stop a threat. I would have no issues with my child being in a school with one of these teams. I know they are just as good or even better than my very own Deputies and they have made a conscious decision to put themselves in place to do whatever is necessary to protect our children.

I know I speak for every parent, teacher and citizens, that we need to find every mean possible to ensure our children are secure in a school environment and that the last thing on their minds is a school shooting. They need to know that we have made their school safe outside and inside and that we have measures in place to protect them.

I believe that with the passage of HB 99, we will make strides in ensuring we give school boards across this great State of Ohio the right to decide how they will protect their students. By giving them the right to decide to protect their students and our children with armed resistance to an active shooter incident if they so desire.

I thank each member of the House of Representatives for your time in reading my letter and I ask regardless of your political affiliation, that you make an informed decision and that your decision is based on only the fact of protecting our children.

Respectfully,

James R. Frye  
Sheriff  
Shelby County Sheriff's Office