

Testimony on House Bill 99  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
November 3, 2021

Submitted by:  
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Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99. My name is Shannon Gallagher. I am a mother of four, a former middle school teacher, a gun owner, and a committed advocate for violence prevention. I became an advocate for common sense gun reform a few years ago as the instances of gun violence in schools rose in our state and around the country. As a mom and an educator, I knew it was my responsibility to become proactive in trying to help schools be physically and emotionally safer for all, as well as supporting legislation that addresses the growing concerns of violence in our schools. Not for one second during all my years of education classes and teaching in the classroom, did I ever think I would be here today asking for a no vote on a bill that would give school districts the authority to allow teachers and/or staff to carry firearms in schools with such little training, especially during a global pandemic. I have talked with many of my friends and peers who are currently teaching or are administrators in the Greater Columbus Area. The anger, frustration and despair I have heard from them was palpable. One started crying saying, "How can they do this to us now?" This educator has been teaching high school in Ohio for decades and she is amazing at it. I have been in her classroom and have seen first hand how much she loves her students and how much they love and respect her. Through her tears she said, "Shannon, I will not continue teaching if this passes."

Even if a teacher is a trained sharpshooter, this bill would add an unnecessary element of danger that could potentially be devastating not only to the student body but to the staff and law enforcement as well. I have looked into the CCW training and I noticed that one of the tenets to the training is to always be mindful of your firearm. Most of the educators and

school employees I know have chosen their occupation because they want their focus and energy to be on enriching students' experiences in school as well as being an emotionally and physically safe person. As a former middle school teacher, there is no way I could have or would have wanted to have had my attention be on anything other than my students, especially during a pandemic. Ohio teachers, staff, administrators and students are feeling the gravity and stress of how to safely remain in school during COVID-19. Please allow them to do their jobs without adding yet another unknown factor to this already overburdened system.

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time and consideration and again urge a no vote on House Bill 99, even with the new changes.