

Testimony on House Bill 99
Criminal Justice Committee
Date: 11/02/21
Submitted by: Abby Hersey

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 HB 99. My name is Abby Hersey and I am an Ohio resident and voter. I'm a mother to three girls, grandmother to two boys, wife, and business owner. I have lived in Columbus my whole life and I am writing this testimony as a very concerned citizen. HB99 would gut the training requirement for teachers to carry loaded handguns in schools. The training outlined in the sub bill is not nearly enough and arming teachers introduces new and unnecessary risks into schools.

Law enforcement professionals have been clear about the dangerous implications when individuals use and carry firearms without the proper training. The police chiefs from Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown sent a joint letter to the legislature on 12/8/20 opposing this type of legislation.

73 percent of US teachers oppose arming school staff. The pandemic has been incredibly stressful for our teachers and adding the immense stress of knowing that their co-workers may have a gun and be untrained on how to use it is not something that needs to be added to their very full plate.

Research has found that increasing armed presence in school is associated with an increase in middle school discipline rates, a decrease in high school graduation rates, and a decrease in college enrollment; and these effects were largest for students who were Black.

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. Just last week the country was gripped by the news of the unintentional shooting on a movie set. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned and cared for they can misfire. Unintentional shootings occur. In districts with armed staff, we have seen guns left in bathrooms, locker rooms, at sporting events, and even an incident where a gun fell out while a teacher did a backflip. Many misplaced guns have later been found in the hands of students. Guns have been stolen from teachers by students and there have been multiple incidents where school resource officers and teachers unintentionally discharged their firearms.

If HB99 passes we can expect more accidental shootings to occur, more guns winding up in precarious locations, and, should a real school shooter enter the vicinity, this legislation may contribute to the loss of life of the very children you are hoping to protect. I ask you to please reject this dangerous bill.

With respect,
Abby Hersey