

Criminal Justice Committee
Opponent Testimony HB 99
Submitted by Ruth Lapp

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 HB99. My name is Ruth Lapp.

I have been a consistent Ohio voter for the past 51 years. I was a licensed duck hunter in my teens. I believe there is a place for guns in our society but it is not in the hands of school teachers. I oppose HB99. Handling a weapon under stress requires more than a few hours of training. The public overwhelmingly prefers more laws to promote gun safety and this is not one of them. We in this country are awash in guns. For the first 68 years of my life I never knew anyone directly affected by gun violence. In the past seven years sadly I know of at least 5. As of now I can include a, now convicted, murderer, his victim, the daughter of a friend shot in a gun robbery and the grandmother of a mass murderer. The Dayton Oregon District shooter was stopped in less than a minute by quick responding, well trained police. Even so 9 people died. Teachers or "authorized" community volunteers having quick access to a loaded weapon seems like a fantasy that puts an otherwise safe classroom at risk.

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))." This is a very troublesome statement and I strongly urge you to give this legislation the priority it deserves. Playing politics with children's lives cannot have a good outcome.

Bills calling to arm persons with insufficient training continue to show up in both houses of our legislature, yet the research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are. I hope you would agree we all want to protect children, so rather than listen to the extreme gun lobby, that has a financial motivation to pass this bill, please look at what data tells us: criminal background checks, red flag laws, safe storage laws, additional physical security upgrades, emergency plans among staff and access to school mental health professionals are the ways to increase safety in schools. Please see:

<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>

According to a July 2015 report conducted by Mount St. Mary's University and the National Gun Victims Action Council, "If you're going to rely on a gun for self-defense, you should know how to handle and use it." The report adds that "safe and effective firearms usage requires mental preparation; legal knowledge; judgmental awareness; as well as firearm expertise, skill and familiarity." We know that hitting a target, (most likely a current or former student, as research shows), and the chaos that transpires with an active shooter in a classroom is something we should never expect a teacher or any other "authorized person" to do. But setting them up with 28 hours of education and a few hours of live fire training is completely insufficient. I'm sure the idea of 2-4 hours ANNUALLY of additional training is well intentioned but do you really think that's enough practice time to keep shooting skills sharp? It will never keep students safe but will certainly add to the body count.

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. Just last week we learned of the death of a videographer by Alec Baldwin who was unintentionally shot on set. It appears there were very rigid protocols to prevent such a tragedy. Something went wrong. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned and cared for they can misfire. Unintentional shootings occur. There have also been incidents of guns being stolen from teachers' desks or even grabbed from armed person's holsters and winding up in students' hands.

Student safety is critical. Mass shootings in schools are a terrible reality that parents and children should never have to worry about. The legislation the 134th General Assembly has provided regarding armed personnel in schools falls short yet again of providing adequate training in schools. I ask that you please vote no on this dangerous bill that will result in the shooting deaths of innocent children.

Respectfully,
Ruth Lapp