



**Opponent Testimony on SUB House Bill 99–  
REGARDS ARMED PERSONS WITHIN SCHOOL SAFETY ZONE  
House Criminal Justice Committee  
By Tracey Mackay, League of Women Voters of Ohio  
November 4, 2021**

Chairman LaRe, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee: Thank you for letting me speak on Sub. Bill HB 99 and the League of Women Voters' strong opposition to the bill.

My name is Tracey Mackay. I am a League of Women Voter Hudson member and the committee chair for the League of Women Voters Arming School Personnel Study. The Arming School Personnel Study assesses the impact on the health and safety of students, school personnel and communities when school personnel are armed while on school grounds. I testified in opposition to HB 99 in April. Our opposition is even stronger for Sub. Bill HB 99.

Our twelve-person committee of League members from around the state researched and discussed the effects of guns in schools for over a year. The committee members are educators who have spent their careers creating safe learning environments for students, a psychologist dedicated to children's mental health, high school and college students who shared their first-hand experiences with lockdown drills, members of Moms Demand Action, and a member who subscribes to the Buckeye Firearm Association Newsletter. Since my first testimony, Local Leagues discussed our study and came to consensus on a very strong position of not arming school personnel under any circumstances. Given the number of school districts already arming school personnel, we stated the need for extensive and ongoing training under the guidance of law enforcement.

The League of Women Voters of the US has taken a strong position on protection of the "Consumer," in this case both the students in these schools and the persons pledging their lives in protection of them. In that regard, we oppose sub. Bill HB 99's overriding of the Ohio Supreme Court's decision in *Gabbard v. Madison Local School Dist. Bd. of Edn.* We support regulating firearms for Consumer safety and the training necessary for high stress situations that might involve implicit bias. LWVO supports

the consideration of the effects on targeted students including students of color in this decision to arm school personnel. For those students, there is already an atmosphere of toxic stress. The presence of guns increases the sense of intimidation and fear, affecting their health and safety. Twenty hours in no way constitutes proper training for such situations.

Additionally, since the introduction of this bill, the Arming School Personnel study has completed the consensus process among Ohio League chapters. While the consensus is that under no circumstances should school personnel be armed, Leagues did weigh in on what requirements need to be there given Ohio's current practice. Again, underscoring that they opposed the arming of school personnel, Leagues called for extensive training beyond the concealed carry permit. A combination of state and local law enforcement should determine the firearm training requirements such as frequency, length, content, certification, trainer qualifications, continuing education, etc. for the training of armed school personnel. Included in that training, implicit bias needs to be considered as well as the trauma of all involved. The Kerwin Institute, in its special report (<https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2014-05/ki-data-report.pdf>), found that, similar to national trends, school discipline data from Ohio also reflects racial disproportionalities. The report examined K–12 discipline disparities by race in Ohio. Among the key findings are the following:

- Black, non-Hispanic students are and have been disciplined more often than their non- Black peers. Looking at the data starting in 2005–06, even during the academic year when non-Hispanic Black student discipline rate was at its lowest (62.3 disciplinary actions per 100 in 2009–10), it was still more than twice the rate of the next most disciplined group that year (Multiracial students had 30.8 disciplinary actions per 100 in 2009–10).
- When out-of-school suspensions were isolated, it was found that despite a brief decline for non-Hispanic Black students from 2008–09 to 2010–11, this rate has gradually increased in recent years, furthering the gap between these students and their peers of all other races.
- With few exceptions, disobedient/disruptive behavior is overwhelmingly listed as the most common reason for each type of disciplinary action in Ohio in 2012–13. Disobedient/disruptive behavior accounts for approximately half of all out-of-school suspensions and nearly three quarters of all in-school suspensions. These high percentages are notable because determinations of disobedient/disruptive behavior tend to be highly subjective; what one individual regards as disobedient or disruptive may not necessarily be viewed

as such by others. Subjective determinations of disobedient/disruptive behavior may be susceptible to the influence of implicit bias.\

- The very action of having to decide to arm school personnel has already come under tremendous criticism. The American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, National PTA, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Fraternal Order of Police of Ohio reject the idea of arming school personnel. The National Association of School Resource Officers recommends that if school personnel are to be armed their training should be on par with law enforcement positions. Additionally, there is concern among law enforcement officials that school personnel would not have the ability to effectively make split second, life-or-death decisions.
- Already under stress from active shooter drills, studies also show that students, particularly in middle and high schools, feel less safe and have more anxiety when school personnel are armed. Notwithstanding, there are districts, some as far as 40 minutes away from professional emergency assistance, who have made the tough decision to utilize current Ohio law, passed in 2016, to arm their personnel as part of the districts' safety programs. If Sub. Bill HB 99 removes all training, allowing school personnel to be armed with the most minimal safety training, the situation would be more complicated and worsen the circumstances for all concerned. The National Association of School Resource Officers notes that without proper training and regular shooting practice under high-stress simulations, tragedy could result.  
(<https://www.nasro.org/news/2018/02/22/news-releases/nasro-opposes-arming-teachers/>)

If enacted, Sub. Bill HB99 would endanger our students, teachers, school administrators, law enforcement and all other personnel. Without reasonable safeguards no one is protected.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio categorically opposes Sub. Bill HB 99. Thank you for your consideration.

*The League of Women Voters of Ohio was formed in May 1920 out of Ohio's woman suffrage movement. The League is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League has over 4000 members and 32 local Leagues across the Buckeye State.*