

Criminal Justice Committee
Opposition Testimony for House Bill 99

Barbara McCarren

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 and Sub Bill HB 99

I am a long time resident of a lovely suburban/rural area in Stark County. As a mother of 2 boys and a former teacher, I am completely against HB 99. As an educator, I can't think of anything more disruptive to the well-being of the teaching environment than having guns in proximity to teachers and students. Schools are not the place for "martial law", they should be a safe environment for learning. Both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, oppose having guns in schools. All the research tells us that more guns in and around school grounds means there will be more gun violence around our children. Boston University's School of Community Health Sciences, studied this question and found that "states with higher levels of gun ownership have disproportionately large numbers of deaths from firearm-related homicides." (LiveSciences). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has stated that "the safest home for a child is one without a gun". To me, the logical conclusion then is that the safest school for a child is a school without guns.

If a community does decide to have armed officers in the school, they should have extensive training similar to that of "Peace Officers". Sub Bill HB 99 would reduce that training to a total of 28 hours, only 2-4 of which involve live firing or handgun training. So a civilian could go for 1 weekend of training and then be making life or death decisions around our children! This is a dangerously low standard and will result in unnecessary tragedies. Additionally, there is no evidence that arming adults reduces school shootings.

Although this bill does not use the term "teachers", but "authorized persons" there is nothing to prevent a teacher from being authorized. So teachers can still end up carrying guns in our classrooms which is very dangerous. Parents will have no way to find out whether teachers are carrying loaded weapons since the bill simply requires schools to notify parents that "the board or governing body has authorized one or more persons to go armed within a school..."

I urge you to vote No on HB 99.

A concerned citizen,
Barbara McCarren