

Testimony on House Bill 99

Criminal Justice Committee

Date: Nov. 2, 2021

Submitted by: Kathleen McGorray

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 Kathleen McGorray. I am a very concerned citizen and a career Ohio K-12 educator. I spent 40 years in Ohio schools as an elementary school teacher and principal and I am strongly opposed to HB 99.

HB99 seeks “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)). As someone who spent every single day with Ohio’s school children, I am terrified that this legislation will lead to tragedy.

The research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are. We all want to protect children, so rather than listen to the extreme gun lobby, with its 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, staff emergency plans, and access to school mental health professionals are the ways to increase safety in schools.

<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 2015 report by Mount St. Mary 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.” Eighteen hours of education and two hours of live fire training is completely insufficient. It will never keep students safe and will certainly add to deaths in Ohio schools.

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned, and cared for they can misfire. Unintentional shootings occur. There have been incidents of guns being stolen from teachers’ desks or even grabbed from armed person’s holsters and winding up in students’ hands. I dealt with hundreds of students and staff interactions in my school every day, and it is all too easy to conceive of such tragedies occurring.

Student safety is critical. The legislation the 134th General Assembly has provided regarding armed personnel in schools again falls far short of providing adequate training for persons bringing loaded guns to school.

Please vote NO on this dangerous bill and avoid the shooting deaths of innocent Ohio children. Thank you.