

Testimony of House Bill 99

Criminal Justice Committee

Submitted by:

Ann Morahan

Chair LaRe, Representatives Hall and Abrams.

Thank you for allowing me to present this written testimony in opposition to HB99.

My name is Ann Morahan. I am a retired teacher, having taught for 37 years. I have had the pleasure of experiencing students of ages 3 to 19. As a former teacher I care deeply about all students and teachers.

It would appear, that our misguided legislators continue to bombard us with unnecessary and even dangerous gun legislation. I get it that you are seeking a response to the tragedy of school shootings. However, you are headed in the wrong direction. You have been seduced by the risky and false idea that arming teachers and school staff will make our schools safe. In fact, an armed teacher cannot, in a moment of extreme duress and confusion, be expected to be transformed into a specially trained law enforcement officer. AN ARMED TEACHER IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO SHOOT A STUDENT BYSTANDER OR BE SHOT BY A RESPONDING LAW ENFORCEMENT THAN BE AN EFFECTIVE SOLUTION TO AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IN A SCHOOL.

For the last 20 years, our students, educators, and parents have lived with the reality of school shootings. Meanwhile, America's gun violence epidemic, in the form of mass shootings, gun homicides, non-fatal assaults, unintentional discharges, and firearm suicides, has been infecting America's schools. The failure of our leaders, like you, to address the causes of school gun violence from all angles is having lasting consequences for millions of American children.

In a recent report, Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association have crafted a comprehensive plan focused on interventions that can prevent mass shooting incidents and help end all gun violence in American schools.

The First part of this plan focuses on preventing shooters from getting their hands on guns by enacting sensible gun laws: requiring background checks on all gun sales so that minors and people with dangerous histories can't evade our gun laws; securing firearm storage laws to address the primary source of guns used in school gun violence; raising the age to purchase semiautomatic firearms (Why do we have military style weapons in a civil society?); passing Extreme Risk laws like Red Flag laws so that law enforcement and family members can act on warning signs of violence and temporarily prevent access to firearms.

The Second part of the plan focuses on evidence-based and expert endorsed actions that schools can take: establishing threat assessment programs in school to identify students who may be in crisis, assess the risk, and appropriately intervene without overly relying on discipline or the criminal justice system but by expanding access to mental health services in school; Implementing basic security upgrades and planning in advance for emergencies so staff can respond quickly; establishing safe and equitable schools to help reduce gun violence, especially in high risk-communities.

The lack of access to mental health professionals like psychologists and psychiatrists in the schools is appalling. When I was teaching, it took months to have a child tested by a psychologist. **TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE.** You can change that by stipulating more money be added for more mental health professionals.

Another reason to scrap this bill is the fact that the rate to insure this practice would be untenable. The one insurance agent with whom I spoke said most companies wouldn't cover guns in the school or if they did, the rate would be cost prohibitive for the school system.

I respectfully suggest that you scrap this bill and initiate some of the suggestions in the above plan.