



Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools

Mark A. Murphy, Superintendent
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Ohio House of Representatives
Criminal Justice Committee
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Re: Written Proponent Testimony for House Bill 99

November 2, 2021

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chairman Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee:

As the superintendent of Tuscarawas Valley Local School District, I appreciate the opportunity to express written support of House Bill 99 to restore ability for local boards of education to authorize trained employees to carry a firearm on school property.

When I began my career as superintendent in 2005, I never would have considered or supported the arming of employees to protect the lives of children, staff, and guests in our schools. My thinking completely changed about 5 years ago after learning about *Faculty & Administrator Safety Training and Emergency Response (FASTER)*, as well as consulting with Tuscarawas County Sheriff Orvis Campbell and his staff on this important topic. I came to realize the following:

- My training as an educator to run, fight, or hide was good, but simply not enough. Over the years, children have been indoctrinated to get quiet, turn off lights, lock doors, and cower in the corner when confronted with an armed gunman. It is woefully insufficient when an armed individual intent on causing harm or killing others enters a building or opens fire at an extra-curricular event. Clearly insufficient.
- In nearly all case studies I have reviewed, children and adults lost their lives at the hand of a gunman long before law enforcement could arrive on the scene. It's too late for law enforcement to counter and save lives. Instead, the role of law enforcement often becomes one of securing the scene, restoring control, and launching an investigation. Again, this is insufficient for keeping children safe and preventing the loss of innocent lives.
- The response time for law enforcement to arrive on scene in rural counties can be excessive. For instance, the response time in Tuscarawas County which covers approximately 572 square miles may take anywhere from 10-25 minutes. Lives are lost in this timeframe. Again, insufficient.
- Hiring one or more school resource officers (SROs) really only makes one *feel better* about keeping students safe. SROs serve a great purpose in building

positive relationships with students and assisting administrators with difficult students or disruptive parents. SROs, however, can't be everywhere, districts on tight budgets cannot afford to employ them, and they are difficult to find. Again, insufficient.

I wholeheartedly support empowering local boards of education to authorize trained school personnel to carry firearms on school property for the following reasons:

- By nature, teachers, staff, and administrators will do ANYTHING to protect children, even if it means giving their own lives. These are the types of individuals who are willing to volunteer, train, and submit to ongoing assessments and qualifications to protect others in a school environment. Effective and proactive.
- Authorized armed, concealed personnel positioned throughout buildings and school districts all day, including evenings and weekend extra-curricular events, is a much more effective measure than waiting for the arrival of law enforcement or assigning a few school resource officers to roam through the building/district. Effective and proactive.
- In Tuscarawas County, the training required for authorized armed school employees exceeds training required by Ohio Peace Officers. Effective and proactive.

In summary, empowering local boards of education to authorize armed school personnel is an effective and proactive measure to keep people safe in the school environment. Caring, committed, and highly trained school personnel will do whatever it takes to protect children, even if it requires the use of a firearm (as a last resort) to eliminate a threat and save lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark A. Murphy
Superintendent