

Testimony on House Bill 99
Criminal Justice Committee
November 1, 2021

Submitted by: Meghann Naveau

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 Meghann Naveau, a lifelong Ohioan, business owner and parent.

The General Assembly states in HB99 “that the purpose of the provisions is 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)). This is a very troublesome statement, and I urge you to give this legislation the priority it deserves. **Playing politics with the lives of Ohio’s school children will most definitely lead to tragedy.**

Bills calling to arm persons with insufficient training continue to show up in both houses of our legislature, yet the research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are. I hope you would agree we all want to protect children, so rather than listen to the extreme gun lobby, that has a 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, emergency plans among staff 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 July 2015 report conducted by Mount St. Mary’s 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.” We know that hitting a target, (most likely a current or former student, as research shows), and the chaos that transpires with an active shooter in a classroom is something we should never expect a teacher or any other “authorized person” to do. But setting them up with 18 hours of education and two hours of live fire training is completely insufficient. It will never keep students safe but will certainly add to the body count.

Under Ohio law, a student driver must have a minimum of 24 hours of classroom instruction and eight hours of behind-the-wheel instruction in driver training. Students also must complete at least 50 hours of in-car practice (10 at night) with a parent or legal guardian.¹ When we as a state require this level of training, we recognize the value of in-depth, in-person practice when operating a tool/machine that has the potential to harm and even kill others. Why would we require hundreds of hours less of training for a tool that can be used to kill many people in a short time?

In addition, teachers and law enforcement oppose allowing guns in schools. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation’s two largest teachers’ organizations,

¹<https://www.drivertraining.ohio.gov/drivers.aspx>

oppose arming teachers.² The National Association of School Resource Officers strongly opposes proposals to arm teachers due to the risk it would pose to law enforcement, students and the school community, as well as the risks to the armed teachers themselves.³

I have personally spoken with officers from the Centerville police department about this issue, and they expressed concern about armed people in schools making their jobs harder in the event of a school shooting. They worry about the greater risks and loss of life because officers would likely be unable to quickly identify and subdue an active shooter when multiple people are armed and firing upon police arrival. And, even some of the most highly trained law enforcement officers in the country, those of the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators.⁴

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. Just last week we learned of the death of a videographer by Alec Baldwin who was unintentionally shot on set. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned and cared for, they can misfire. Unintentional shootings occur.

Student safety is critical. Mass shootings in schools are a terrible reality that parents and children should never have to worry about. The legislation the 134th General Assembly has provided regarding armed personnel in schools falls short yet again of providing adequate training in schools. I ask that you please vote no on this dangerous bill that will result in the shooting deaths of innocent children. Thank you.

Please help me and every Ohio parent, teacher, and school faculty member to continue to do everything in our power to protect our children. Oppose HB 99.

Sincerely,
Meghann Naveau

² Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: A Plan for Preventing Mass Shootings and Ending All Gun Violence in American Schools," February 2020, <https://www.everytownresearch.org/school-safety-plan>

³ NASRO, "NASRO Opposes Arming Teachers," February 22, 2018. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3cVbBxE>

⁴ Bernard D. Rostker et al., "Evaluation of the New York City Police Department Firearm Training and Firearm-Discharge Review Process" (RAND Corporation, 2008), <https://bit.ly/2U9bk0t>.