

Thank you members of the committee for providing the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 99.

I would like to speak from the point of view of a student. I am a recent graduate of an Ohio high school where we have felt the trauma, fear, and anxiety that an active shooter threat brings. We were told to go into lockdown where we stayed huddled in a corner, terrified, anxiously contacting our parents because we did not think we were walking out of that school safely. We stayed that way for 2 hours hearing shouts outside of our door from law enforcement. I can safely say that was the single most terrifying moment of my life. Thankfully, there turned out to be no tangible threat; just someone with the twisted idea that calling in an active shooter would be funny. However, just because there was no malicious person with a gun does not mean our pain, fear, and anxiety were made-up. The next day back there was police presence everywhere and thus the number of guns in our school increased. I talked to everybody about this and they all had the same answer: seeing guns, and knowing guns are around, made them scared to come to school because they never knew when those guns would go off.

The point here is clear, more guns in schools does nothing to dissuade the fear of students and only distracts them from their learning and makes it difficult for them to come to school. I struggled going back to school knowing there were trained officers with guns there so what makes us think that students will want to enter school buildings knowing that their teachers are handling firearms with only 8 hours of training? If this bill passed when I was in high school, I'd be hard pressed to go to school in person (which I think we can all agree is the most effective way for students to learn). Beyond the negative mental health impacts bringing more guns into schools creates, there is a practical issue of liability. To expect teachers (who entered their fields in order to teach) to have to deal with the emotional and physical responsibilities of potentially owning a gun is unfair and irresponsible. There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools as it is beyond the scope of their jobs and creates the unintended effect of making it more difficult for students to learn when the role of schools and teachers is to make it easier.

Thus, I implore the committee to recognize the importance of fortifying Ohio students' education by prioritizing mental health and not by increasing the presence of guns which distracts students from their learning, makes students anxious to go to school in person, and adds liability on the part of teachers and the school as logic dictates that the more guns in schools means more times guns go off in schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill