

Testimony on SB 168

Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Senator Frank Hoagland, Chair

Senator Terry Johnson, Vice Chair

Senator Cecil Thomas, Ranking Minority Member

Submitted by: Cathi Kulik

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Minority Member Thomas and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 168. My name is Cathi Kulik, and I am speaking to you today as a concerned private citizen, a mother, a retired public school teacher and the Volunteer Education Co-lead in Central Ohio for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. I was born and raised in the Youngstown area and attended Bowling Green State University for my undergrad work. My graduate work was done at The Ohio State University and Ashland University. As an adult, I have lived and worked in the Cleveland and Columbus areas. I've spent my entire life in Ohio.

I am opposed to arming teachers. "There is no sound research on whether arming teachers prevents school shootings," according to the Congressional Research Service (March 13, 2018; Nathan James). In an FBI report on 160 active shooter incidents that occurred between 2000 and 2013, both inside and outside of academic settings, five (3%) ended when armed citizens exchanged gunfire with shooters. The remainder of the incidents ended when police arrived, unarmed citizens intervened, or the shooter took his/her own life.

As I stated earlier, I am a retired teacher. I think about what this would look like in my classroom. Is the gun in my classroom? If you know kids, there's nothing about that that sounds like a good idea. Is the gun in another room that I would have to retrieve, as I understand is a part of training some teachers in Ohio are currently

receiving? Leaving my students during an active shooter situation does not seem like a wise decision. I would have to have the gun on my person if I am effectively going to protect my students. If someone is armed and enters my classroom, I am clearly the likely first target, shot first with no opportunity to defend my students. And if I'm not shot first, we now have two armed shooters in the classroom. Who gets hurt in the crossfire?

As a teacher, I am data-driven, so I continued my research. What do the credible studies tell us about protecting kids in our schools?

Some of the organizations that I learned oppose this approach to school safety are the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the Major Cities Chief Association (which represents 75 large cities in the United States and Canada). I learned that the National Association of School Resource Officers states that armed teachers are a risk to law enforcement, students, school community members and the armed teachers themselves (National Association of School Resource Officers, [nasro.org/faq/](https://nasro.org/faq/)). J. Thomas Manger, then the president of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, said in 2018 that, "The more guns that are coming into the equation, the more volatility and the more risk there is of somebody getting hurt" (America's Police Call BS on Arming Teachers, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/03/policechiefscallbullshitonarmingteachers-sandyhook-parkland-columbine/>). In a 2018 National Education Association survey of 1,000 members, 74% of teachers opposed arming teachers ("NEA Survey: Educators Say No To Arming Teachers, Favor Real Solutions to Gun Violence," NEA Today, Tim Walker, March 13, 2018). In a poll of 497 teachers conducted by Gallup in March of 2018, 73% said they are opposed to arming teachers and other staff in the school buildings (Megan Brenan, "Most US Teachers Oppose Carrying Guns in Schools, Gallup, March 16, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2MPTRV5>).

The NEA survey stood out to me, that teachers favored “real solutions” to the gun violence crisis. And, as I continued to research, I noticed the same recurring advice on how to prevent school shootings. Not once did anyone say the solution is more guns. Rutgers Graduate School of Education Professor Matthew Mayer says that schools should develop and maintain a positive school climate (“Gun violence: Rutgers expert tells us how to reduce it,” Asbury Park Press, March 15, 2018).

In “Call to Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America (“Call to Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America,” Interdisciplinary Group on Preventing School and Community Violence, [education.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence](http://education.virginia.edu/prevent-gun-violence), University of Virginia, February 2018), two hundred universities, national mental health groups, school districts, and thousands of individual experts agreed with the idea that we need to change our mindset from reaction to prevention. Create a school climate that does not accept bullying and discrimination, provide adequate staffing of counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, and establish and train school and community-based threat assessment teams to provide interventions for those in need.

A Secret Service report found that 100% of school attackers exhibited warning signs before the attack. Attackers make plans and talk about them. How often have we heard, after a school shooting, “I never thought he/she would really do it”? (“A Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence,” US Department of Homeland Security, United States Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, Lina Alathari, Ph.D. Chief, 2019).

Research from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (2020) also recommends that schools prioritize creating a supportive school environment, decreasing isolation for students and closing gaps in mental health services (“Gun Violence: Facts and Statistics,” Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Center for Violence Prevention, December 2020).

On the first day of school in 2012 at Perry Hall School in Nottingham, Maryland, a student, armed with a 16-gauge shotgun, pulled the trigger and injured a classmate. Jesse Wasmer, a guidance counselor, tackled the student, stopping the attack. Thankfully, no one was killed. Mr. Wasmer said, “Never have I thought, ‘I wish I had a gun.’ What we need is more caring adults in these kids’ lives, not more guns.” (“Gun Violence: Fighting For Our Lives and Our Rights,” [books.google.com](https://books.google.com), Matt Doeden, 2019).

I am here today to ask you to do the hard work. Let’s make being proactive our priority. Let’s create a supportive school and community climate for all of our kids. The experts tell us the solution to the gun violence problem is not more guns. I’m asking you to create public policy based on research and facts.

I’m happy to respond to any questions.