

Testimony against SB168  
State Veterans and Public Safety Committee  
June 14, 2021  
by Douglas Rogers

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson and Ranking Member Thomas and other members of this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify against SB168

By way of background, I graduated from Yale Law School in 1971. Then I was: (i) a captain in the Military Police; (ii) a partner in the Vorys law firm in Columbus for over 20 years, and (iii) an adjunct professor at the Moritz College of Law for about 5 years.

SB168 creates a new “type” of person - “school safety designee” in proposed R.C. §5502.701(A)(2) – that would eliminate the current training requirement of over 700 hours in R.C. §109.78(D) for teachers, coaches and other staff who are not school resource officers to carry loaded firearms into schools. Instead, school safety designees would have to complete as yet non-existent “basic firearms training program for school safety designees” (lines 1059-1066 of SB168). But there is no minimum standard for what that training must include. In other words, the required training goes from over 700 hours currently to an undesignated minimum – a minimum without a floor. That would be dangerous for students.

No legislation on guns in schools should be approved removing the current training standard in 109.78(D) without substituting a detailed new, vetted standard approved by law enforcement experts. SB168 fails the basic principle of President Reagan of trust but verify. Ohio must have a verified standard before lowering the current standard.

Last year the chiefs of police of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown opposed reducing firearm training to 8 hours: “Significantly reducing firearm training for school personnel will make our schools less safe and increase the likelihood that a student will be unintentionally harmed or killed by a firearm in a school.”

The National Association of School Resource Officers strongly recommended that “no firearms be on a school campus except those carried by carefully selected, specially trained school resource officers (SRO’s) who are career law enforcement officers with sworn authority, deployed by employing police departments or agencies in community-oriented policing assignments to work in collaboration with schools.” <https://www.nasro.org/news/2018/02/22/news-releases/nasro-opposes-arming-teachers/> (emphasis added).

SB168 appears to represent a scattershot approach addressing what is perceived to be a problem without (a) checking with experts already working in the area (such as Ohio school resource officers), (b) an explanation of costs, and (c) considering whether the focus on military training for school personnel is too militaristic in contrast to the more wholistic approach taken by Governor DeWine’s Ohio School Safety Program. Some of my questions are:

1. If a teacher (as opposed to a school resource officer) is to be allowed to carry a loaded firearm into a school, shouldn’t some limits be put specifying in what circumstances that

should be allowed? If school boards will allow teachers to carry guns in schools, shouldn't the parents be advised of which teachers, so parents can decide if they want to move their children?

The General Assembly is responsible for schools under Article VI, section 2 of the Ohio Constitution. You must not abdicate your responsibility to protect the lives of Ohio's school children by enacting standardless regulations.

2. Chair Hoagland testified that "the Mobil Training Teams ... throughout Ohio [would] ... be available to work hand in hand with the Governor's Ohio School Safety Center...."

Does the Ohio School Safety Center support SB168? If it has not taken a position, what does the Ohio School Safety Center think about SB168?

3. Why create a separate administrative structure (Mobile Training Teams) apart from the already existing Ohio School Safety Center?
4. Chair Hoagland testified that the "term Mobile Training Teams comes from my early days serving in the United States Military.... their intent was to ensure that allies had the equipment and necessary training to support their fighting force."

Is that military/fighting atmosphere what the General Assembly wants to create for Ohio's civilian schools?

5. I trained in Ft. Benning, Georgia and Ft. Gordon, Georgia, and they were excellent training to be prepared to go to war and police Army personnel.

Is preparing military personnel to be a "fighting force" the appropriate training for personnel facing such diverse dangers to safety as drugs, guns, bullying and mental health issues?

6. Senator Hoagland testified that "This legislation would require the appointment of the Chief Mobile Training Officer by the Director of Public Safety and 16 Mobile Training Officers," and the legislation indicates a budget of \$12 million for two years.

What is the budgetary basis for the recommendation of \$12 million for two years?

Would it be better to appropriate \$12 million for two years for paying for more school resource officers in schools throughout Ohio rather than more trainers?

7. Why locate the Chief Mobile Training Officer with the Department of Public Safety rather than the Department of Homeland Security, the home for the Ohio School Safety Center?

Pease vote against SB168. Thank you very much.

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