

Testimony on Senate Bill 168
Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Sara DeMuch

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to SB 168. I am an Ohio public school teacher and mother of two public high school students. SB 168 is a bill that would create a statewide school safety training program with regional experts explicitly authorized to offer firearms training to school staff. Essentially, this bill would create a formal statewide program to arm Ohio's teachers.

As a teacher, I am required to make decisions in my classroom that are research based. I am asking that this committee do the same when making decisions that impact my job and the safety of our students and teachers. According to data of gun violence on school grounds, 58% of shooters were associated with the school - either as current or former students, staff, faculty, or school resource officers. When looking at the three mass shooting incidents, 100% of shooters were current or former students. The U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence (2019), found that 100% of school attackers exhibited warning signs ahead of time. Research also shows that 73% to 80% of school shooters used guns from their home or the home of a family member or friend. There is no data or research that demonstrates a reduction in gun violence due to armed school staff. When making data driven decisions, it is clear that to reduce gun violence on school grounds, we need threat assessment programs, red flag laws, and safe storage laws. This will reduce gun violence, allow schools to intervene early, and provide students the support they need in a time of crisis.

[\(https://everytownresearch.org/report/preventing-gun-violence-in-american-schools/\)](https://everytownresearch.org/report/preventing-gun-violence-in-american-schools/)

Over the past few years, a number of gun bills have been introduced in the Ohio legislature that would arm or make it easier to arm school staff. No evidence or research has ever been presented though that supports the connection between arming school staff and a reduction in school gun violence. In fact, research shows that firearms are now the leading cause of death for children and teens. Simply having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide by three times and homicide by two times. If teachers have firearms in a classroom, it increases the likelihood that they will be accessed by students. Not only is arming teachers dangerous, it is opposed by a vast majority of U.S. teachers. There is simply not enough information or support within schools to support implementing such a dangerous strategy.

[\(https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-and-teens/\)](https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-children-and-teens/)

<https://everytownresearch.org/solution/arming-teachers/>)

Schools are a place of learning where students need to feel safe and respected. At this critical time when we are emerging from a pandemic and focused on re-integrating our students back into in-person learning, we need to understand that students' mental health is still vulnerable. We have seen firearm suicide rates increase among children and teens in recent years and we need our legislators to provide much needed assistance in ways to keep students and staff safe. SB 168 does the opposite and will only make our students and teachers less safe. It is not grounded in research or supported by any data that shows it is an effective way to reduce gun violence. As an Ohio resident, voter, parent, and teacher, I urge you to put our students and teachers first and not move forward with this bill.

Respectfully,
Sara DeMuch
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