

Testimony on Senate Bill 168

Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

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Submitted by:

Tammy G. Daniels

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 Senate Bill 168.

My name is Tammy Daniels, and a high school English teacher. For the past few years, this year being the exception due to COVID related teaching constraints, I assigned my high school seniors with the task of writing argumentative letters to their state and federal representatives. My students first researched bills concerning issues important to them on the Ohio and federal legislative web pages. After additional research about their chosen issues, some even changed their viewpoints. They then generated an argument, either for or against that issue, and after several drafts, the letters were mailed to their respective legislators. By and large, my regular education seniors were very enthusiastic about this project. Many felt empowered by knowing their voices would be heard. I remember one student asking me, "Do you mean they will actually read my letter?"

My students wrote about a wide variety of issues that were important to them, everything from abortion rights, stronger penalties for animal cruelty, and harsher penalties for passing stopped school buses to protecting clean air, public breastfeeding, and gun violence prevention. The latter is why I am here today.

Senate Bill 168 would create a statewide school safety training program with a group of regional trainers who can train and work with school staff on school safety. These trainers would also be able to offer firearms training to school staff as long as staffers have a CCW permit. My question to you is: In your zeal to get more guns into public schools, have you taken the time to consider how informed students would feel about their teachers and other staff members being armed during their school day with only "*initial basic firearms training?*"

I can tell you that I and 73% of teachers in the United States oppose arming school staff, regardless of who leads the training or for how long the training lasts. I can tell you that students of color feel less safe in schools in which teachers were armed. I can tell you that there have been numerous incidents in schools with armed district personnel in which guns were left accessible to students in areas such as restrooms and locker rooms.

I will close my testimony with some of the words of my students. While they were written back in 2019 and in the winter of 2020 about Stand Your Ground and Permit-less Carry, and other gun violence prevention legislation, most of which apparently fell on deaf ears, generalizing the parts of their statements and feelings about gun violence and the proliferation of guns in their community to Senate Bill 168 is not much of a stretch. They understand the horror gun violence and do not want guns anywhere near them whether they are in their neighborhoods or at school. I hope this time you hear them and vote no on yet another gun bill that endangers their lives.

“I understand that you’re trying to help people who actually need the law, but it’s just going to keep raising gun violence injury and deaths by firearms when it passes. ...I just don’t see where or who this law is protecting people when it’s encouraging violence instead of peace and understanding.”

“I believe that removing weapons from dangerous people is a benefit to the citizens of Ohio because it guarantees safety. Many people have lost their lives to deranged weapon owners and this bill will help prevent that from happening again.”

“The United States government knows that what they are doing is wrong for not voting for HR 165. I saw people in my family being killed in front of my grandma’s house. They just killed both my family members first my uncle and then my cousin. What scares me is seeing someone else I love get shot.”

“This bill should not be advanced because permitting concealed handguns increases crime. People may go straight to their guns, increase the chances of a situation escalating and turning lethal. In the American Journal of Public Health it states, “Someone carrying a gun for self- defense is 4.5 times more likely to be shot during an assault than an assault victim without a gun.” There are already so many forms of violence, not only in just my town, Middletown, but all around Ohio as well. This bill seems as if it just a pathway to more crime and violence.”

“I personally think that if it was made the easy to conceal carry without a license, the number of violent crimes and unintentional shootings would increase. If those rise, the town's economy would start to lower meaning fewer and fewer people would visit and move here, which would cause a loss of money and make the town poor. Being 21 and making a decision like that is kind of crazy depending on what the terms. A young person’s brain is not even developed fully until he is at the age of 25. Basically, you are releasing a law saying that you can go out and purchase a gun without any credentials other being 21 or up, but your brain doesn't even work all the way.”

(These last two were written to thank Senator Thomas for tackling the gun violence issue).

“I want to say thank you for introducing this bill. During my years as a student at my high school, I am grateful that we haven’t had any school shootings or any other serious incidents with a gun. Firearms are so dangerous in the community and on school grounds. I think the age to buy a weapon should be twenty-one with license to prove identify. If he or she doesn’t have any valid ID, he or she shouldn’t be allowed to purchase or have possession of a weapon.”

“I am grateful for your taking the time to look at this. I support this bill and highly should see more interest in it. I hope you can debate and discuss to representatives and senators about the dangers of firearms. Weapons are too powerful to have at a young age. I want the future to be safe for kids in the community. Young adults shouldn’t lose their lives to weapons. Young adults shouldn’t have or use a weapon to protect themselves. I’m 18; I grew up in Middletown, Ohio and I do not want to see my friends or even classmates get killed in fatal shooting.”