

Testimony on Senate Bill 168

Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

June 15, 2021

Submitted by: Tony D'Ambrosio

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 Tony D'Ambrosio. I am a parent with two students in high school and one at the Ohio State University. They have all experienced active shooter drills and we as a family are acutely aware of the threat of gun violence on school campuses. I, like all parents, am always concerned about their safety.

In researching the topic, I found that many teachers and school safety experts oppose allowing guns in schools. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, oppose allowing guns in schools. The federal government's chief legal, law enforcement, public health, education, and emergency management agencies all agree that allowing civilians to carry guns in schools is not a sound security practice. In reviewing information regarding firearms training, law enforcement officers receive an average of 840 hours of basic training, including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force. However, in states with laws aimed at arming school personnel, school staff receive significantly less or no training. Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement in the country, the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators. This leads me to the conclusion that arming educators with minimal training and experience is inappropriate, dangerous, and will not lead to the desired outcome of reduced gun violence in schools.

As with many issues, primary prevention is often the best approach to mitigating unwanted outcomes. Some examples include Extreme Risk laws, secure gun storage laws, closing the loopholes for background checks on all gun sales, raising the age to purchase semiautomatic firearms to 21, public awareness campaigns about secure gun storage, implementing physical security upgrades to prevent access to schools and classrooms via access control and internal door locks. These are just a few ways in which to address gun violence on school campuses.

Educators have more than enough on their plates. Adding the responsibility of possessing, safely managing, and potentially discharging a firearm in a highly charged situation is an undue burden. Not to mention the possibility of an accidental discharge, loss or theft of

the firearm, improper use, or mistakenly being identified by law enforcement as a “bad guy with a gun” in a chaotic active shooter situation. As many schools are now re-integrating students into in-person learning, the state should not be focused on creating programs that would increase the number of guns in our schools.

Arming teachers is not the right solution to preventing gun violence in schools. Arming teachers *will not* make me feel my children are safer in school. Arming teachers *will* increase the likelihood of gunfire in schools. Please vote NO on SB 168.