

Testimony on House Bill 99

Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by: Ann Shroyer

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 HB 99.

I am very concerned about HB 99 and am in strong opposition. I understand that the goal of HB99 is to keep Ohio's children safer, but in fact, it will do the opposite. The research is clear that bringing guns into classrooms will make children less safe. Firearms are now the leading cause of death for America's children and teens. Simply having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide by three times and homicide by two times. The less children are exposed to guns, the safer they will be. If we really want to keep students safe, we must listen to the research: pass criminal background checks on all gun sales, pass Extreme Risk Protection Order laws and safe storage laws, add physical security upgrades, develop emergency planning among staff, and provide access to school mental health professionals.¹

Keeping Ohio school children safe most definitely does not include radically reducing the current training requirement for armed teachers. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that an

armed teacher must have at least 20 years experience as an active duty peace officer or have completed Ohio Peace Officer Training. HB 99 would gut that training requirement down to only 22 hours. There is no amount of training that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. If HB99 passes we can most certainly expect more accidental shootings to occur, more guns winding up in precarious locations, and, should a real school shooter enter the vicinity, this piece of legislation is going to contribute to the loss of life of the children you are hoping to protect. For the safety of all of Ohio's school children, please reject HB 99 and focus instead on legislation that would prevent school shootings before they occur.

When one considers that the majority of school shootings are committed by current or former students who have done the safety drills at a school, this bill seems to be training teachers/staff to shoot and kill our children. I am FURIOUS that this bill wishes to hide from me if my child's teacher would be armed in the same room with him. This OH legislature continues to tout that parents know best – well then where in god's name are my wishes included in this bill. I know that a gun in school does not make a child safer. This bill supercedes and overrides my wishes and also is built to deceive me of knowing what goes on in my child's classroom. I want to know the mental health status quarterly if not monthly of every armed teacher and staff in my child's school. I want to know how their marriage is going, if they have any custody issues. I want to know about any financial stressors, have they had a death/loss in the family. I want to know that armed person's physical health issues as well and would definitely want a list of medications that they are on to make sure there are no contraindications for

driving/carrying a gun around my child in a school. I am a parent, I know best – where is my voice in this bill.

I became involved in tracking gun safety legislation and gun violence prevention because of an incident at my son's church based preschool when he was 3. We were in Central PA at the time, and the Conceal Carry law there at the time considered a church private property and therefore they had to opt out of allowing conceal carry weapons. A volunteer at the church bent down to pick up an item and the conceal carry holster inside his pants fell out and onto the floor where it spun across the floor in a crowded gym of preschoolers and their family members. When it was done spinning, it was aimed at my son's friend. If anything else had fallen out of that man's pants and was aimed at a 3 year old that morning, there would have been arrests and the evening news, but because it was a gun, it was just an oops. In the same region a year earlier, a teacher at a private religious elementary used the bathroom and put her firearm on the back of the toilet. She forgot it there. 4 young elementary students used the bathroom before one reported the gun on the toilet. It is a miracle that no one was hurt. She wasn't even fired, but allowed to resign. A few months ago we had that charming gentleman from Johnstown with a handgun jammed down his pants at the girls state wrestling tournament. Again, miracle that no one was hurt, including his ability to have children. Guns in schools do not make children safer. We saw that with the police response in Ulvalde. Guns in school do not make children safer. A teacher with a classroom of students is going to struggle to get a headshot successfully on a shooter in body armor and an AR-15.

Stop with this madness of a Rube Goldberg approach to pretending you care about the safety of our children. Stop dancing around the issue with fancy doors, "consultants" of questionable authority who make money off of our fears, blaming children's light up shoes, their joy, their possibility to be loud. I have a friend who is terrified that her child with autism and very concrete understandings will just scream if he does not understand what is going on during an active shooter event. Another friend's

middle schooler finished a test in a school hallway sobbing because she was so terrified that if there was a shooter, no one would let her in a classroom because that is what they are trained to do. Stop putting the onus of safety on CHILDREN for the love of god, and do the work yourselves. Instead of wasting all of our time with this pandering to the gun lobby, do the real work of school safety. Pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order, Raise the age for the purchase of long rifles, Pass a secure storage bill, , increase mental health access in schools for children and families, Implement quality anti-bullying programming across the districts stop being bullies yourselves and catering to bullies who come to you demanding guns everywhere. I am a parent – what I say matters.

Respectfully Enraged,

Ann Shroyer, Westerville