

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Submitted by: Ariel Miller

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.

The timeline and events in Uvalde show “good guys with guns” surrounding the school and just on the other side of the classroom where the gunman was shooting students. This array of first responders was daunted by a single 18-year old with a semi-automatic weapon and hundreds of rounds of ammunition which he could fire at high speed. At Sandy Hook, Adam Lanza fired 154 rounds in less than five minutes, killing 20 children and six teachers before killing himself.

Senator Hoagland, I remember your account of how powerfully the mass murders at Sandy Hook grieved you because of your work supporting schools and children in Afghanistan, and that you went to the memorial for the Sandy Hook victims. I know you want to prevent the death of children. You told me that no one should use a weapon without extensive safety training. Arming teachers with minimal training is only putting more guns in school and increasing the risk that children will be killed or wounded.

Please stop HB 99 and instead draft bills to increase mental health first aid training for schools including peer mediation training. Instead of blocking Ohio cities from passing evidence-based gun safety ordinances, the Ohio Legislature should bring in experts on prevention programs that have been correlated with a drop in gun violence, and use that to inform the policy you make.

As we saw last week, eighteen year olds are still impulsive, and access to guns makes it easier for them to act on their impulses, with irreversible consequences and lifelong trauma to the survivors. One of my husband’s past medical partners is the aunt of one of the students murdered in Parkland, Florida. This dedicated doctor’s life, and her family’s, has been changed forever. This is the future for survivors in Buffalo and Uvalde.

I would like to make these points from my own experience in Cincinnati:

- I was with my fourth- and sixth-grade granddaughters in Anderson Township on Tuesday afternoon, May 25 when the news of the mass shooting began reaching them through their cellphones. They could not get to sleep that night. At the sixth grade graduation for Maddux Elementary two days later, the principal and assistant principal broke down in tears as they congratulated the graduates including our granddaughter Evie. As I saw her walk across the stage and stand in a row with her homeroom classmates, I could not escape the horror of seeing how vulnerable they were, standing there exposed to any crazy, traumatized person who might choose to burst in at a moment which was supposed to be pure joy for students and their families.

- After the mass shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, our parish consulted the Wyoming Ohio Police Chief, who told us that even highly trained police officers have great difficulty firing accurately in an active shooter situation. An armed teacher or school worker with minimal training could easily kill or wound students in an active shooter event.
- Many children die in Cincinnati when they pick up and play with unsecured weapons in their homes. What happens when a student finds a teacher's gun?
- We continue to lose many children to suicide both in Cincinnati Public Schools and suburban districts like Forest Hills, where two of my granddaughters are students. I am a Rotarian and placed a Brazilian exchange student with a host family near us in 2018. The father told us that he had multiple guns and kept them all in a gun locker "except for the loaded handgun next to my bed." The Rotary Youth Exchange did not at that time prohibit host families with guns so we placed the student with that family, who took him to target practice. Five months later, the family's 14-year old son, an 8th grader, committed suicide.

Putting more guns into schools is not the solution. Investing in prevention – equipping teachers and students to notice warning signs and taking effective action to stop bullying and provide effective mental health support to distressed students, can really save lives.

IF GUNS WERE AS REGULATED AS CARS

	
Title and Tag at Each Point of Sale	Title and Tag at Each Point of Sale
Driver Training	Gun Training
Written Test	Written Test
Practical Test	Practical Test
Health Requirements	Health Requirements
Liability Insurance on Each Vehicle	Liability Insurance on Each Gun
Renewals and Inspections at Intervals	Renewals and Inspections at Intervals



You represent and are responsible for protecting the safety of Ohioans, an overwhelming majority of whom support safety laws for the use of guns. I am closing with a graphic shared by one of the interfaith groups I volunteer with in Cincinnati. I'm sure you hear this comparison all the time. A car is not a weapon, it's a mode of transport. Semi-automatic weapons and high capacity magazines are weapons of war designed to kill multiple people in minutes.

Please do not let yourself be coerced by the gun lobby. We voters who yearn to keep Ohio children alive and safe will remember and thank you for your courage if you stop HB 99.

Sincerely,
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