

**Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee**

Submitted by:
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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 to it. I understand that the goal of HB99 is to keep Ohio's children safer, **but in fact, it will do the opposite.**

Here are some facts from an article published just few days ago:

(<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2022/05/25/on-gun-violence-weve-got-to-be-mad-as-hell-and-say-were-not-going-to-take-this-any-more/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=303f0bd2-739b-43f9-aa1a-c01ee92b5013>)

“Primum non nocere”*. “First, do no harm”. This is a dictum for health care professionals to consider the possible harm that any intervention might do. **Politicians ought to conduct themselves by the same principle, especially when it comes to gun violence, as this too is a public health issue.*

But instead, Ohio politicians have relentlessly loosened gun laws for 20 years, and gun violence in Ohio has kept going up.

On June 14, a new law passed by Ohio's legislature and [signed by Gov. Mike DeWine](#) in fulfillment of his [promises to the gun lobby](#) will allow all Ohioans 21 and older to carry a concealed weapon they are legally allowed to possess.

House Democrats tried to amend into the bill language closing a loophole that **allows buyers at gun shows to skirt background checks; another creating a legal mechanism to allow families and law enforcement to petition judges to temporarily seize weapons from people experiencing a mental health crisis; and a third requiring gun sellers to distribute a one-page pamphlet at the point of sale outlining Ohio's gun laws.**

All three failed largely along party lines.

Police and prosecutor organizations, anti-gun violence activists, and public health researchers **opposed** the new permit-less carry law.

The gun lobby pushed it and even [wrote testimony in favor of it given by the bill's sponsors, state Reps. Tom Brinkman and Kris Jordan, in the Ohio General Assembly](#). Metadata attached to a copy of their testimony on the [legislature's website](#) shows the executive director of Ohio Gun Owners as the author of the document.

When asked about this by Ohio Capital Journal, **Brinkman said, “I have no idea who writes my testimony. I never write my testimony. I never write my floor speeches. That’s what staff is for.”**

Ohio has steadily relaxed its gun laws over the last 20 years. **The state created the concealed carry program in 2004, originally requiring 12 hours of training. That was whittled down to eight hours, and with the new law, no training whatsoever.**

Statehouse lawmakers **have also passed a pre-emption law blocking cities from enacting stricter gun policies than those of the state.**

And in 2020, DeWine **signed a so-called “stand your ground” law removing any duty to retreat before using deadly gun violence.**

Statistics show [as gun laws loosen, gun deaths increase](#).

In 2020, researchers from the Rand Corporation reviewed 123 studies and found moderate evidence **that background checks, waiting periods and limited evidence that concealed carry restrictions all [lessen violent crime](#).**

It also found moderate evidence that **so-called “stand-your-ground” laws — such as the one Ohio [implemented last year](#) — increase homicides.**

Ohio lawmakers [are considering 29 new gun-related laws this General Assembly.](#)

Overall, Republican bills expand gun rights while Democratic ones put forward safety regulations.

While the GOP bills loosening gun laws get heard in committee, passed by committee, brought to the floor, passed on the floor, and signed by the governor, the 16 gun-safety laws proposed by Democrats have received a grand total of one hearing in committee, and otherwise sit to die.

Today we all sit in horror.

Nineteen little kids and two of their teachers violently murdered in an American school. Twenty-one more American families shattered — absolutely shattered — forever.

We ask you, Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee,

Why does this kind of horror have to continue in the lives of innocent American families? We place our trust in you to be good stewards of society and the public's safety, when we elect you and put you in these seats of government.

State Rep. Brinkman did not even recognize his own testimony! He said he did not know who had written it?

In fact, it was gun lobbyist and executive director of Ohio Gun Owners, Chris Dorr, who did!

(<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2022/03/04/gun-lobbyist-wrote-gop-lawmakers-permitless-carry-speech-document-data-shows/>)

Dorr writing the testimony is among the clearest signs of the close working relationship between gun lobbyists and Republican lawmakers.

Is this conscionable?

We are supposed to live our lives peacefully knowing that our safety and well-being are your # 1 concern! But with the kind of gun laws being passed, that are paving the way for more and more violence in our society, how can anyone in our community live in peace? Why can we not depend on you to be concerned for our safety and well-being???

Please help us by rejecting HB99, by blocking HB99! Please DO NOT allow it to pass, if you consider yourselves to be good stewards of your constituents and their safety!

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 red flag laws and safe storage laws, add physical security upgrades, develop emergency planning among staff, and provide access to school mental health professionals.¹

We cannot keep Ohio school children safe by radically reducing the current training requirement for armed teachers from 728 to 22 hours!!!!!!!!!! The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that an armed teacher must have at least 20 years of experience as an active-duty peace officer, or, have

¹<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>

completed Ohio Peace Officer Training. **HB 99 would gut that training requirement down to only 22 hours!** 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. Please do not allow this HB 99 to pass!**

Respectfully,

Bakhtavar Desai
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