

Witness Information Form

Please complete the Witness Information Form Before testifying:

Date: May 30, 2022

Name: Betsy Mitchell

Are you representing yourself? Yes

Organization: Individual

Position/Title: NA

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes

Business before the committee

Legislation: HB 99

Specific issue: Arming teachers

Are you testifying as a: Opponent Yes

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes

How much time will your testimony require? 15 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

As a retired teacher and teacher trainer in higher education, competitive shooter, gun owner, and gun collector I oppose HB 99 which allows teachers to be armed in the classroom without proper training in gun safety and responding in an emergency situation. As a competitive shooter, I understand the importance of arms training. As a retired teacher educator, I understand the duties and responsibilities of managing a classroom. The two do not mix.

I understand that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

I oppose HB 99 that allows any person to carry a concealed weapon without a concealed weapons license. I oppose arming teachers with guns. I oppose the idea floating around that a teacher with no or even insufficient training be allowed to have a gun in the classroom.

Teachers will have a difficult time keeping the gun out of students' hands.

Many years ago when I was teaching in middle school, we had a field day for the last day of school. Setting up the games outside, I realized that I had forgotten some necessary equipment to do our event. I asked my most trusted student to run into the classroom and get the necessary items, one of which was in my locked drawer in my desk. She zoomed off and quickly returned to the field with all the items in hand. We quickly set up in time for the first group to do the game.

Then, I realized that one of the items, the stop watch, had been securely locked in my desk. I had not given the student my keys yet she was able to get the stopwatch with little trouble. When asked how she got into the drawer, she smiled sweetly and shrugged her shoulders.

Every teacher can relay stories like this on how students are able to get around in the classroom effortlessly. Keeping a gun safe in the classroom would be impossible. Just ask a teacher.

It requires countless hours of training to respond to an emergency situation.

I am a competitive shooter, a gun owner, and a gun collector. I have had thousands of hours of training in gun safety, gun smithing, and shooting at competitions. Yet, I know that I would need to have more training to develop the skills needed to respond to an emergency situation. Targets do not shoot back.

Teachers must understand how to operate their gun in an emergency.

I have worked with hundreds of folks who bought a gun and then wanted to learn how to shoot it. This includes how to clear a jam, how to hold a gun properly, how to keep your hand steady, and how to cock a gun.

In an advanced gun safety class a woman, who had taken her concealed carry class and a beginners class was excited about taking the advanced class. She had her brand new gun with her and was having trouble cocking the gun. With her finger on the trigger, she turned the gun sideways to cock it and pointed it in the direction of the Safety Officer. I ran over and shoved the gun down range and sure enough, she had shot it. I thought I lost a finger in that one. We didn't lose the Safety Officer.

In competitions we know at some point our guns might jam. You can lose priceless seconds if you cannot clear the jam quickly. Shooters new to competitions always have trouble with jams. Guns are very sensitive to the movement of a nervous shooter and that causes guns to jam.

Lots of unintended actions can cause a jam, and the action can dictate what type of jam will occur. If a teacher cannot clear a jam in seconds, they will become a main target.

Guns and ammo need attention even when they are not in service. If a gun has not been cleaned properly or stored properly they are too dangerous to use. The guns must be inspected every couple months. The ammo must be also.

One time a shooter came into the range where I worked part time with an assault stay gun and brought his own ammo. He needed help knowing how to load it. I opened his ammo and it was pretty shades of blue and green. His ammo was so improperly stored, it was molding. I asked him where it was stored and it was in a closet. I asked him if the closet was climate controlled. No. It was not. I told him it was good he came in the store before he shot because he would have been going out in an ambulance. The gun probably would have exploded.

This bill puts guns in the hands of untrained persons who are not prepared to do what they think they can - protect themselves and their students.

One of the key factors in teacher success is classroom management. Discipline is the most challenging skill for student teachers to learn. When they do their student teaching, they have had observations of real classrooms as they complete their program. They are not in full charge of the classroom, they are just observers or helpers. They find during their student teaching when they do gain full control of the classroom that discipline is not easy.

I had one very shy, sweet student who started her student teaching. I received calls from the cooperating teacher that the student was having difficulty managing the classroom. It is common to be called in with student teachers who were struggling with management.

I called the student in and asked her, "Why did you go into teaching?" (She had changed majors many times. She sobbed heavily, "They told me I was too sweet and shy to do anything else." Teaching is not for the sweet and shy. She managed to pass student teaching, with very weak discipline skills.

Teachers are not sitting behind desks. They are all over the classroom, busy with students. It is not uncommon to have student teachers sick within the first two weeks of student teaching. They are exhausted, they do not sit down until they get into the car to leave the school.

Teachers are all over the classroom, they cannot be at arms length of a locked gun in the event of an emergency. They would have to get to the desk, unlock the drawer, unlock the gun, load it, and have the ability to aim it at a person and fire.

The stories continue.

I can relay thousands of stories why arming well meaning teachers will not stop an armed shooter. If you have time let me know when I can buy you coffee and we can discuss this.

I cannot fathom why any responsible legislature would approve this bill when it creates more complexity than it solves. This bill solves no problem.