

Testimony on House Bill 99  
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:  
Crystal Gnau

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. One point that is expressed during carry conceal courses is that you should not carry a gun unless you are prepared to use it. That hesitation allows the perpetrator to take the very gun you purchased to protect you and your family away. We cannot ask teachers to make a split second decision to kill one of their students. Teachers have a personal relationship with many of these children and are less likely to pull the trigger further endangering the other students inside the classroom and throughout the building. Teachers use their own money to feed hungry students, to purchase items to encourage learning in their classrooms, they purchase books, and they spend countless hours outside of school to prepare lesson plans for the next day. Teachers are asked to report abuse and neglect to child services and they try to engage what many would consider the outcasts. Teachers wear far too many hats as it is, forcing them to police the very buildings that they work without proper training is dangerous.

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. As a teen, I attended the funeral of one of my cousins, he died at the hands of his brother who found their grandfather's gun. At the time I didn't know that coffins could be so small. The trauma did not stop there; there was enough guilt for every family member to carry around with them. The funeral was different; you could feel just how close they were from completely breaking. You don't discuss that in your bill. If someone had passed a bill that required them to have that gun locked away, he would have went to kindergarten, he would have played sports, he would have had the chance to grow up and have his own family instead his mother had to buy a tiny dark suit to bury him in. Arming a teacher he never had the opportunity to meet would not have protected him. There are far more meaningful bills that you are not even addressing. This was not the only brush with an accidental shooting involving a child during my teens. I do not need to read the research to know that 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 legislation that has been written by many of your colleagues that demand 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.

Keeping Ohio school children safe most definitely does not include radically reducing the current training requirement for armed teachers. Arming teachers will not keep our children safe, their teachers will not follow them to the grocery store, their teachers will not sit with at church, their teachers will not accompany them to a music festival and their teachers will not be going to a every party these children attend. Mass shootings are happening everywhere our children go; this is not even a band aid. It is offensive that you would ignore good sensible legislation to sit without even a hearing. 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.

Texas law enforcement did not engage with the Robb Elementary School shooter because they stated they were fearful that they would be killed. They lacked equipment to open a door. They lacked the fire power. Law enforcement would not approach the shooter, with their years of experience they were too frightened to engage, years of training and **they** did not approach the shooter why would you expect a teacher to do more than law enforcement. The situation you are creating is a school full of additional guns for the shooter to use when he runs out of ammunition.

Let's be honest, mass shooters do not kill their targets with a hand gun, they use rifles with large capacity magazines. They intend to kill as many people as they can in a blink of an eye. Survivors often get away or disarm the perpetrator when their gun misfires or when they attempt to reload. How will you arm your teachers to handle this situation? Will you be okay with sending thoughts and prayers to their loved ones when they die trying to kill a suspect with a military grade weapon?

We need to stop worshipping guns and start regulating "our militias".

Respectfully,

Crystal Gnau, South Vienna Ohio