



VETERANS AND
PUBLIC SAFETY
COMMITTEE

Witness Form

Today's Date 5/30/22

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Organization Representing: _____

Testifying on Bill Number: HB 99

Testimony: _____ Verbal _____ Written Both

Testifying As: _____ Proponent Opponent _____ Interested Party Are you

a Registered Lobbyist? _____ Yes No

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Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Dorothee Bouquet, Ph.D.
School Board Member for the Yellow Springs EVD

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 a school board member for the Yellow Springs Exempted Village District and a parent of two elementary-age students in my local, public school. My youngest has a disability. I am also the godmother of a young man who is experiencing a severe mental illness and who recurrently has violent thoughts toward himself and others.

Here are my concerns as a school board member:

- Teachers oppose allowing guns in schools.¹ They are already resigning in a larger wave than we have experienced before. They are working hard enough as it is, and they are exhausted. Adding another expectation to their long list of duties will break us. We are barely capable of filling all of our vacancies at this point.
- Law enforcement also opposes guns in schools.² 22 hours of training under this bill pales in comparison to the 728 hours of instruction required by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission. 22 hours pales in comparison to the 840 hours of basic training including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force. And we know that, in spite of that more extensive training, trained officers still struggle, even fail, to keep our children and teachers safe in active shooting events. We are more likely to increase everyone's risk of being hurt or killed instead of decreasing it. The solution is not more guns.
- The bill does not specify any requirements for the safe storage of the gun at school, which opens up the risk of accidental discharges, students taking a hold of the gun, and trauma caused to kids.
- The presence of a gun in a school would amplify the already documented impact of ableism, racism, and sexism. We know that women, people of color, and people with disabilities are statistically more likely to be on the receiving end of a gun than others. Opening up the possibility of having guns in the classroom will amplify those disparities.

¹ <https://www.ohea.org/cms/assets/uploads/2021/04/OEA-HB-99-Opposition-Testimony.pdf>

² NASRO, "NASRO Opposes Arming Teachers," February 22, 2018. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3cVbBxE>.

- Schools will face new liability, should school employees be armed. When several districts in Kansas sought to arm teachers, the insurance companies informed them that they would not insure such a dangerous practice.³ In other instances, liability insurance providers have declined coverage to these schools while others have increased annual premiums, stretching already tight budgets.⁴
- In this bill, local boards of education will also be financially responsible for paying the fees for the guns. Our school budgets are too tight to carry this burden, especially when it would increase the risk of gun-caused injuries and deaths.

HB 99 will disrupt public education. It will endanger the lives of students, teachers, and employees.

I also want to express my worries as a mom. One of my children has autism. I can guarantee you, that under the stress of an intruder on the school grounds, my son would not know how to hide and keep quiet to escape the threat of an active shooter. I cannot imagine how his teacher would yield a gun while trying to calm him down and shuffle him and his peers into safety. I also worry that my son would try to handle a gun, should he come across one. We, as a country, have experienced so many deaths of children, neurotypical and others, around guns, that it is just ill-advised to bring one into their learning environment.

Finally, I want to speak as the godmother to a 24-year-old young man who is experiencing day-in and day-out violent delusions. Not all people who experience mental illness are violent, far from it. In my godson's situation, it is however the case. He just told me last night that he works out so that he can "demolish" others, should he perceive them as enemies. He has twice in the past attempted suicide by driving into oncoming traffic, just to avoid it at the last second. He repeatedly considers the way in which he would eliminate the people that he believes are "evil" in the world.

But you know what he's never considered? Obtaining a gun. He has never considered it because he lives in a country,

- where access to guns is regulated,
- where there are background checks on all gun sales,
- where gun owners must obtain a gun license, register, renew their registration every year, and maintain a liability insurance policy,
- where there are red flags laws and safe storage requirements.

³ 2018, <https://bit.ly/2S9hqy7>. 6 Michael Hiltzik, "One big problem with the idea of arming teachers: insurance companies won't play along, and for good reason." Los Angeles Times, February 26, 2018, <https://lat.ms/2BkRxBb>.

⁴ Seven Yaccino, "Schools Seeking to Arm Employees Hit Hurdle on Insurance", July 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/us/schools-seeking-to-arm-employees-hit-hurdle-on-insurance.html>.

He does not live in the United States. He lives in a country where he is able to receive the proper care and treatment without the stigma of turning into a school shooter because no one in that country is worried that he will have access to a firearm.

So, I beg you, senators: reject HB 99. It is not the solution we need. Please look at all of the other countries in the world that have successfully squashed their risk of school mass murders. We know what solutions work. Consider those.