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Chairman Hoagland and committee members, it is with a heavy heart that I stand here today. Heavy because 19 children and two teachers were gunned down in their classroom shortly after awards ceremonies one week ago. Heavy because I testified against similar legislation two years ago and it's still under consideration.

I've racked my brain trying to find the words that will reach the hearts and minds of those who think this legislation is appropriate. In my testimony two years ago I stated that there's no research that shows schools are safer with armed staff. In fact it's quite the opposite as the Giffords Law Center documented more than 60 instances of staff mishandling guns on school property. One of those instances occurred in Ohio.

Two years ago in my testimony I stated active shooter drills harm our children's mental health. Countless numbers of Ohio citizens and politicians claimed that wearing masks during the pandemic harmed children yet I don't see the same outcry against the active shooter drills.

Now many politicians and citizens want schools to be hardened. Schools in Ohio already resemble fortresses with limited access, buzzers to admit people and walls of cameras in the main offices surveilling school grounds. What exactly does hardening look like? Does that mean surrounding schools with fences topped with razor wire so schools look more like prisons? Is that really what we want for our students, staff and communities?

It's time to stop doing the same thing and expecting different results. Schools shouldn't have to bear the brunt of the problem of mass shootings. Research shows that lax gun laws lead to more gun deaths. Ohio is quite frankly moving in the wrong direction.

It's time to stop being afraid of the gun lobby, particularly the NRA, an organization that is quite frankly in decline.

It's time for Ohio legislators to look at the research, the polls that show educators overwhelmingly don't support armed staff. This is a profiles in courage moment for members of this committee. I ask that you do the right thing and stop this legislation. For in the words of former South African President Nelson Mandela: There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.