

Erin Gabbard HB 99 Testimony
May 31, 2022

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas and other members of the Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Erin Gabbard. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and I offer them in opposition to Sub. HB99.

This bill is radical. HB99's proposed modifications to Revised Code section 109.78 would authorize local school boards to allow school employees to carry loaded firearms on school grounds with **97% less training than the state currently requires**. This does not protect our children, it endangers them. Allowing teachers to go armed with our children at school with at most 22 hours of training is woefully inadequate. It makes our children less safe. When our board enacted a policy in 2018, that looks very similar to this bill, they were unable to provide a single piece of research to support the implementation of said policy. As a constituent, it would please me if you could share the peer-reviewed research that you analyzed that supports these modifications and plainly states that a maximum of 22 hours of training is sufficient for staff members carrying guns around our children.

This bill is reckless. Without any oversight or requirements for school boards to follow, these proposed modifications would allow boards to arm staff members who have failed static accuracy tests multiple times. I know because that is what our board did. Proponents would tell us to vote with our feet, but this bill is so radical, it doesn't require school districts to disclose that they have armed teachers. How can we vote with our feet when we're not even informed with the knowledge we need to make such decisions?

I want safe and common-sense solutions for protecting our children in school. I want to believe that we all want that. I have tried to understand why anyone would consider a bill to lower training requirements to arm school staff and keep coming back to the same questions: Who does this bill protect? Who does this bill serve? Why would anyone consider such a reckless and radical bill?

Let me put it more plainly. The first sentence of the Ohio Statehouse Security FAQs states that **"...with the exception of those carried by peace officers in the course of their duties and as expressly authorized under division (N) of section 105.41 of the Revised Code, firearms or other weapons, concealed or otherwise, are prohibited within the capitol building..."**. Under this bill, the people that protect you every day would have over than THIRTY TIMES more training than the staff members protecting our children. Are you thirty times more important than the children of Ohio? You are putting our children at risk, risks that you as lawmakers will not even take. This bill is radical, reckless and cowardly.

Who does this bill protect? Who does this bill serve? Why do you trust local school boards to make safety decisions when they're not safety experts? Would you want your child in a school around armed staff with the weapon they carry daily and only 3% of the training that the state currently requires? Please ask yourself these questions, and I hope you'll answer honestly.

All we're asking is for you to protect our children the same way you protect yourselves.
This bill does none of that. This bill is not about protecting our children. If you are concerned with the safety of our students in Ohio schools, you must vote no on this bill.