

May 30, 2022

HB 99

Senate Veteran's and Public Safety Committee

1 Capitol Square Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Opposition to HB 99 regarding firearms training

Dear Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99 which is being brought up for hearings in your committee on Tuesday, 5/31. My name is Julia Elkus and I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio. I am providing written testimony to express my concerns about this legislation, which diminishes school safety and puts the lives of teachers, students and school staff in peril.

I am part of a family of teachers. My brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and three nieces are all teachers. I am part of a community of parents. I have friends who are school principals, administrators, tutors and volunteers as well as friends who have had a family member tragically killed in a school shooting. No one I know, not one of these individuals, believes that arming teachers will make schools safer. In fact, there is no available data that demonstrates arming teachers adds to the safety of schools.

HB 99 minimizes training required for teachers carrying concealed weapons in schools. The extraordinary risks posed by allowing loaded guns in schools, environments literally filled with children, mandates that anyone carrying a weapon should be trained to the fullest extent possible. Allowing a teacher to bring a firearm into a school essentially deputizes them as an armed guard of that school – and they should be trained as such. Anything less is a recipe for unintended tragedy and creates a more dangerous, not a safer, environment for all. Imagine a teacher with just 2 hours of actual field training, as is required in this bill, standing in a smoke-filled hallway at Parkland High School as terrified students stream past while a shooter armed with an assault weapon fires at will. Could he or she pick out the shooter in that fog of war environment? Could they be confident they would hit the shooter, and not mistakenly murder a fleeing student? What happens when the shooter swings around and fires an

assault weapon at them? And what about the students in the teacher's classroom who have been abandoned? Who is taking care of them?

It is the responsibility of this Committee, and all OH legislators, to do everything in their power to make schools safe places. Asking teachers to protect classrooms with hundreds of hours less training than school resource officers does just the opposite. HB 99 reduces the training requirement for teachers, who would be charged with the same responsibility as a school safety officer, to just 3% of the training that officer receives. Three percent. I have a daughter who has completed 11 years of medical training to be a pediatric oncologist. This training is required because she too, just like the teachers carrying guns at school, is being asked to save a child in a life or death situation. Would you want her administering highly toxic chemotherapy drugs to your child with just 3% of her current training? Would you want teen drivers allowed behind the wheel with just 1.5 hours of supervised driving experience – 3% of the mandatory 50 hours? Is there anything that can do more harm in less time than a loaded gun? Why would we ask teachers to assume the terrifying and deadly responsibility of killing an armed murderer **with only a tiny fraction of the training required to do that job?**

There are many steps we could and should be taking to protect teachers and students before they are ever put in these horrifying positions. We could do a better job of identifying “bad guys with guns” before they ever purchase one through a better background check system and through Extreme Risk Protection Orders. We could keep assault weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition out of the hands of teens, who aren't allowed to buy handguns, cigarettes, or alcohol until they're 21 because we know they are not fully mature and entirely capable of poor judgment and emotional decision making. The strategy of putting more guns in the hands of more people with less regulation and less training clearly isn't working in a country losing 100 people a day – men, women and children – to gun violence. Please act on your sworn duty to keep Ohioans safe by taking measures to mitigate tragedy, rather than shifting that responsibility to teachers and asking them to risk their lives once a tragedy is already unfolding.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Elkus