

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Katie Passarell

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 work as a pediatric nurse practitioner and over the past ten years have unfortunately taken care of a multitude of families whose lives have been significantly affected by gun violence through both homicide and suicide. Guns are now the number one cause of death of children, and as an advocate for children I firmly oppose HB99.

I understand that the goal of HB99 is to keep Ohio's children safer, and for this effort I applaud you, but in fact arming teachers it will do the opposite. The research is clear that bringing guns into classrooms will make children less safe. Simply having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide by three times and homicide by two times. The less children are exposed to guns, the safer they will be. We also need to think seriously about children's mental health. Arming teachers or having guns present in school would undoubtedly increase youth anxiety and only contribute to the mental health pandemic we are experiencing. If we really want to keep students safe, we must listen to the research: pass 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. 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.

I once again applaud the work you are all doing. I urge both parties to come to an agreement to help keep our communities and schools safe.

Respectfully,

Katie Passarell, MS, CNP-C