

Testimony on House Bill 99

Veterans and Public Safety Committee

May 31, 2022

Submitted by: Leah Bunck

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the committee thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99. I am writing to you today as a mother of two, the spouse of a teacher who was involved in a school shooting, a voter, and a social worker. I am also here as a volunteer in the Ohio chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. I oppose HB 99 because I am strongly against the danger it poses to the safety of schoolchildren and teachers.

HB 99 would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the extensive safety training required by current Ohio law. I acknowledge since its first hearings the bill has been modified from 8 to 22 hours of training, but it is still not enough.

As you know, under current state law, all armed school employees must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer. Basic peace officer training is regulated by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission, and comprises approximately 728 hours of instruction.

HB 99 would exempt teachers from this requirement, and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 22 hours of training. This is still not anywhere near enough training. In other words, if someone completes 22 hours vs 728 hours, that is only 3% of the training a traditional Ohio Peace Officer completes.

We need our students to learn in a safe environment. As the wife of a high school teacher and mother of a kindergartner, I am certain this bill will lead to more dangerous schools. An increase in people with guns with a reduction in training only leads to a false sense of safety within our schools. If this bill is passed, students and teachers could spend more time preparing and debriefing active shooter simulations than an armed teacher or staff member had spent in training to carry a gun within that very same school.

There are many occasions where an adult may need to intervene with an intense interaction between students. As a social worker, it deeply concerns me that someone with only a few hours of training will have easy access to a gun and could make a quick decision to unnecessarily use that gun on a student. Guns should not be in our schools as a deescalation tactic. Our students and school systems deserve better, and deserve to feel safe in an institution of learning.

For the safety of our Ohio's children and teachers, I urge you to oppose HB 99 and discontinue hearings on it.

Leah Bunck, MSW, LSW