

Testimony on House Bill 99, Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Submitted via email by Lisa Vahey, Shaker Heights, lvahey@gmail.com
May 30, 2022

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present my testimony [opposing HB 99](#).

I am an educator. A mother of two. A community volunteer. And I believe we must take appropriate action to keep children safe in school, and the research is clear: **bringing guns into classrooms will make children less safe.**

- Firearms are now the leading cause of death for America's children and teens, and please note that “the vast majority of kids are killed by guns in smaller, day-to-day incidents” rather than mass shootings. (NPR: <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/22/1094364930/firearms-leading-cause-of-death-in-children>)
- Simply having access to a gun increases the risk of suicide - we know this is true for home access (Harvard School of Public Health : <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/risk>)
- Armed adults frequently mishandle their guns in schools. Arming teachers wouldn't decrease risk to students - it would increase their risk. (Giffords Law Center: <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/report/every-incident-of-mishandled-guns-in-schools>)

The less children are exposed to guns, the safer they will be.

I know and believe we want to keep Ohio children safe, so I hope we can work together to learn from the research and implement strong policies in our state:

- 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.

(<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>)

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. This change is **NOT OK**.

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 safer gun laws and championing legislation that would prevent school shootings before they occur. Thank you.