

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by: Megan Overman

Chair Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, I am writing to submit testimony in opposition to HB 99.

While I understand and appreciate the goal of HB 99, and agree that action is desperately needed to keep our schoolchildren safe, I fear this bill will do the exact opposite—and we cannot afford to introduce new threats when the threat level is already unbearably high.

As a child, I received an education on gun safety. We had guns in our home, and I learned to shoot around ten years old. My opposition to this bill is not based on an abject fear or hatred of guns. It is based on an understanding of how much care and responsibility it takes to handle a gun safely. It is based on an understanding of how high-stress, high-intensity situations affect judgement—and how, with a firearm in hand, even a single moment of clouded judgment can cost lives. I am opposed to this bill because I do not want my children, ages 2 and 11, to find themselves in a classroom with an adult who—though trying to do the right thing—is scared and lacks the depth of training and experience necessary to prevent a tragic accident.

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that an armed teacher must have at least 20 years of experience as an active duty peace officer or have completed Ohio Peace Officer Training. HB 99 would reduce that training requirement to only 22 hours. Law enforcement officers receive an average of 840 hours of basic training including 168 hours of training on weapons, self-defense, and the use of force. It is unconscionable to allow teachers to bring loaded guns into the classroom having only a fraction of the training time and experience they need to operate firearms safely.

My opposition is well-supported by both teachers and school resource officer groups. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, oppose arming teachers. The National Association of School Resource Officers strongly opposes proposals to arm teachers due to the risk it would pose to law enforcement, students and the school community, as well as the risks to the armed teachers themselves.

What it comes down to is this: The requirement of 22 hours of gun training for teachers to carry guns in schools is negligent at best. This law is a time bomb, and the students, teachers, and law enforcement officers who could be injured or killed as a result, are counting on the Ohio Senate to make the right choice and stop HB 99. For Ohioans' safety, please reject HB 99 and focus instead on legislation that would prevent school shootings before they occur.

Respectfully,
Megan Overman, Dayton Ohio