

Testimony on House Bill 99
Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Date: May 30, 2022
Submitted by: Michelle Lee Heym

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in strong opposition to HB 99.

Before I get started, I want each of you to know that there's a reckoning happening in this country, and a change happening in Ohio. If I were you, I'd want to be on the right side of history and put the public safety of all Ohioans first, and oppose HB99.

My name is Michelle Lee Heym I presently live in Powell, Ohio. I married Russell Douglas Heym in Old Greenwich, Connecticut May 20, 2000. and my main purpose in life is I am a Mother to 3 girls, Audrey Louise, age 20, Caroline Nicole, age 17, and Kate Addison, age 15. I've done a lot of things in my life but my biggest accomplishment is my children. I grew up in Connecticut and we all lived there during Sandy Hook School massacre December 14, 2012.

Much like Sandy Hook's horrific tragedy, over the past week, I couldn't tear myself away from the television. 20 families will never see their kids again. Let that sink in NRA, who's main purpose is to sell guns, and every single member of Congress, who takes their money and voted for Permittless Carry. An excruciating nightmare for every parent in the United States that's preventable and predictable. This only happens in the United States. There are 400 million guns out there. Why aren't there Universal Background checks on them? Why isn't there a ban on all assault weapons Now, not tomorrow, not next week, NOW!

It is absolutely appalling that HB99 is being heard today, I actually thought it was a joke, a sick joke, but I couldn't sit on the sidelines while some of you attempt to put my children and all Ohio children in danger. I do believe on some level, We all want to keep our children safe, but HB99 will do the exact opposite. It is your duty as lawmakers to put a framework in place to keep our children safe, and I'm sorry but Arming Teachers with minimal training is not going to keep children safe.

We know this, we've known this for 10 years since Sandy Hook. Reject and Stop HB99 Arming Teacher's with 22 hours of training, a bill that would reject the current safety training required for Peace Officer in a school. This isn't Afganistan or Iraq, and our children are not soldiers in a Mobile Training Unit. There's NO WAY the teacher in Uvalde, Texas could have survived if she was armed with a shot gun against the AR 15 assault weapon that killed her and her students.

"Every child is your child, when you're a mom," exclaimed Jenn VandeZande. Every single one of those babies, in Sandy Hook, in Uvalde, in every school shooting, in any shooting, Like me, Jenn is a mom who joined Moms Demand Action after the

Sandy Hook School shooting. Our kids were on lockdown during Sandy Hook, the entire state was terrified and traumatized and we will never ever be the same. We lived in West Simsbury and my children were in elementary school at and my baby was in preschool. This was before there even were formal lockdowns.

And now, 10 years later, 18 students and 2 teachers massacred because YOU, I blame every single lawmaker in the United States for not listening to common sense gun violence prevention measures. How many more kids have to die in our schools before our lawmakers act. I am mad and angry! Simple measures like background checks, banning assault weapons, extreme risk protection orders, and I'm gonna say it red flag law. , I know some of you dont like to hear this, but when somebody buys 2 AR15's and multiple sets of magazines, doesnt that seem off? Freaking call someone! Now that's a red flag that I think we all would agree to, a law that you could bless us with that would save lives.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS?

Between April 1999 and May 2019, there have been six mass school shootings 1 and 39 attempted mass school shootings.

2 Everytown's analysis found that in an average year, 12 children and teens (ages 0 to 19) are shot and killed and 17 are shot and wounded on K-12 school grounds.

3 That is a small proportion of the nearly 2,900 children and teens shot and killed and nearly 15,600 shot and wounded, annually.

4 ● Active shooters often have a connection to the school. The majority of shooters (70 percent) were white males, and nearly all (91 percent) were current or former students at the school.5 ● There are often warning signs. In 100 percent of targeted school violence cases there were behavioral warning signs that caused others to be concerned, and in 77 percent of incidents, other people, most often peers, were told about the shooter's plan.6

● Most shooters obtain their guns from family or friends. 73 percent to 80 percent of school shooters under the age of 18 obtained their guns from home, their relative's home or from friends.

7 ● The burden of gun violence in schools disproportionately impacts Black students. Black students represent approximately 15 percent of the total K-12 school population in the US but constitute 25 percent of K-12 student victims of gunfire.

WHAT WORKS TO MAKE SCHOOLS SAFER?

Passing gun safety laws at the State Level.

● Extreme Risk laws, sometimes known as red flag laws, that empower family members and law enforcement to get a court order to temporarily prevent access to firearms by students or others who are shown to be a threat to themselves, others or schools.

● Secure gun storage laws to address the most common source of guns used in school shootings.

- Background checks on all gun sales so people exhibiting warning signs, minors, and people with dangerous histories can't evade our gun laws and get their hands on guns.
- Raising the age to purchase semiautomatic firearms to 21.

Interventions at the Local Level.

- Public awareness campaigns about secure gun storage and Extreme Risk laws⁹ like the Everytown developed programs Be SMART and One Thing You Can Do.
- Implementing an evidence-based threat assessment program, such as the Comprehensive Student Threat Assessment Guidelines,¹⁰ to empower a school-based multidisciplinary team to assess the risk and appropriately intervene (including use of ERPOs) without overly relying on discipline or criminal justice system but by expanding access to mental health services in schools.
- Implementing physical security upgrades to prevent access to schools and classrooms through access control and internal door locks.
- Emergency planning so administrators or staff can immediately lockdown schools and law enforcement can respond quickly without traumatizing students through extreme drills.¹¹
- Establishing safe and equitable schools by building effective partnerships between staff and students, reviewing discipline practices, tracking data to ensure threat assessment programs do not disproportionately impact students of color and students with disabilities, and considering utilizing a community school model.

The Second Amendment permits “laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools.” *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570, 626(2008)

The General Assembly must not abdicate its responsibility to protect the lives of Ohio's school children. The General Assembly states in HB99 “that the purpose of the provisions is to expressly overrule the decision of the Ohio Supreme Court in *Gabbard v. Madison Local School Dist. Bd. of Edn.* (R.C. 109.78(E)). On March 30, 2020, Ohio's 12th District Court of Appeals ordered Madison Local School District to halt the program allowing teachers to carry hidden, loaded weapons in classrooms with minimal training. Why doesn't this protect our children

Sub Bill HB99 requires 22 hours of training for a teacher or school employee to use a concealed loaded firearm, while Peace Officer's are required to train for over 737 hours. Why would you reduce the training for a teacher when we know in a moment of extreme duress, there is no way a teacher or any employee in a school can transform into a well trained law enforcement officer. There is a false idea that arming teachers and school personnel will make our schools safer It's just not true .An armed teacher and/or school staff will not make our schools safe. Why would a Peace Officer training for 728 hours or 20 years experience suffice for a school guard, but not for a teacher? Again, You cannot expect an armed teacher, in a moment of extreme duress and confusion, be expected to transform into a specially trained law enforcement officer. You just cannot.

An armed teacher is much more likely to shoot a student or be shot by responding law enforcement than to be an effective solution to an active shooter in a school.

During the House proceedings, we discussed To overrule a decision of the Supreme Court is very troublesome statement and I urge them to give this legislation the priority it deserves. Playing politics with the lives of Ohio's school children will most definitely lead to tragedy. We saw it did just that in Uvalde, Texas. What if it happened in Ohio. I just told you our kids are scared. Do you seriously want that on your resume. Please be very careful with your vote.

Gun violence is rampant in America but what happened in Uvalde was predictable and preventable. I heard a child say at a rally this week in Columbus, I'm scared that it's going to happen to me next. As parents, educators, and policy makers, we must come to a solution to best protect our children from harm. The Ohio House Bill 99 Sub Bill attempts to address the concerns many have regarding the lack of training, but it is not nearly enough. It is reckless...Even proponents of this bill believe this. So let's look at it:

HB99, The Sub bill we're looking at right now suggests:

- 8 hours of concealed carry training
- 18 hours of general training
- 2 hours of hand gun training
- 2 hours of additional training

Bills calling to arm persons with insufficient training continue to show up in both houses of our legislature, yet the research is clear that the less children are exposed to guns, the safer they are. I hope you would agree we all want to protect children, so rather than listen to the extreme gun lobby, that has a financial motivation to pass this bill, please look at what data tells us: criminal background checks, red flag laws, safe storage laws, additional physical security upgrades, emergency plans among staff and access to school mental health professionals are the ways to increase safety in schools. Please look at the research yourself.

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

According to a July 2015 report conducted by Mount St. Mary's University and the National Gun Victims Action Council, "If you're going to rely on a gun for self-defense, you should know how to handle and use it." The report adds that "safe and effective firearms usage requires mental preparation; legal knowledge; judgmental awareness; as well as firearm expertise, skill and familiarity." We know that hitting a target, (most likely a current or former student, as research shows), and the chaos that transpires with an active shooter in a classroom is something we should never expect a teacher or any other "authorized person" to do. But setting them up with 18 hours of education and

two hours of live fire training is completely insufficient. It will never keep students safe but will certainly add to the body count.

Finally, there are no specifications in this legislation regarding safe storage of firearms. Just last week we learned of the death of a videographer by Alec Baldwin who was unintentionally shot on set. When firearms are not properly maintained, cleaned and cared for they can misfire. Unintentional shootings occur. There have also been incidents of guns being stolen from teachers' desks or even grabbed from armed person's holsters and winding up in students' hands. And what about the toddlers in Canton, Ohio, that found their parent's gun, unsecurely stored, and now one of those toddler's is dead. Congressmen, did you even know about that? Gun violence in America is hard to keep up with. Now one of those babies doesn't even get a chance to go to school.

Guns are dangerous and they don't belong in schools with people who are not properly trained. Student safety is critical. Mass shootings in schools are a terrible reality that parents and children should never have to worry about. The legislation the 134th General Assembly has provided regarding armed personnel in schools falls short yet again of providing adequate training in schools. I ask that you please vote no on this dangerous bill that will result in the shooting deaths of innocent children. Thank you very much for your time and consideration, and vital attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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1 Columbine High School, Red Lake Senior High School, West Nickel Mines School, Sandy Hook Elementary School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and Santa Fe High School.

2 Defined as incidents where a person came to a school heavily armed and fired indiscriminately at numerous people.

3 Everytown analysis of Gunfire on School Grounds database, number of children and teens killed and shot and wounded includes gun homicides and non-fatal assaults

(excluding the shooter), unintentional discharges (including the shooter) and gun suicide deaths and attempts (including the shooter). Seven-year average: 2013-2019. 4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) Fatal Injury Reports and Nonfatal Injury Reports. A yearly average was developed using five years of most recent available data: 2013 to 2017. Children and teens are defined as ages 0 to 19. 5 Jillian Peterson and James Densley, "School Shooters Usually Show These Signs of Distress Long before They Open Fire, Our Database Shows," The Conversation, February 8, 2019, <https://bit.ly/2vBTA3J>.

6 Threat Assessment Center, "Protecting America's Schools: A US Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence" (US Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, 2019), <https://bit.ly/2U7vnwa>

7 National Threat Assessment Center, "Protecting America's Schools." John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich, "'The Gun's Not in the Closet,'" Washington Post, August 1, 2018, <https://wapo.st/2TyDnTW>;

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, "Source of Firearms Used by Students in School-Associated Violent Deaths, United States, 1992-1999," MMWR Weekly 52, no. 9 (March 7, 2003): 169-72, <https://bit.ly/2RGthlo>.

8 US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education, 1998-99 through 2016-17; National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, 1972 through 2028," Common Core Data (CCD), March 2019, <https://bit.ly/2GI05d3>;

Everytown averaged the student population size, both total and Black student populations, for the years 2013 to 2019. Everytown identified the race of 102 of the 208 student victims identified in the gunfire on school grounds database. The analysis includes in the count of these victims both people shot and wounded and deaths resulting from homicides, non-fatal assaults, unintentional shootings, and suicides and incidents of self-harm where no one else was hurt.

9 17 states (CA, CO, CT, DE, FL, HI, IL, IN, MA, MD, NV, NJ, NY, OR, RI, VT, WA) and the District of Columbia have passed red flag laws.

10 Cornell DG, Sheras P. Guidelines for responding to student threats of violence. Sopris West.2006; National Threat Assessment Center, "Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence" (US Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security, July 2018), <https://bit.ly/2NKlwqD>.

11 Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Educators Association joined together to publish a white paper on the evidence and recommendation on active shooter drills, available at <https://everytownresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FINAL-School-Safety-Drills-Fact-Sheet-Final-021020B.pdf>