

Opposition Testimony to House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Mike Halaiko

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. My name is Mike Halaiko, and I am a retired Ohio Public School Teacher/Administrator/Coach with over 40 years of experience. My career started in Akron, with a year in Cleveland, and the remainder of my service in New Lexington City Schools.

I am very concerned about HB 99 and am in strong opposition. The research is clear that bringing guns into classrooms will make children less safe. Firearms are now the leading cause of death for America's children and teens. 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. 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.

There are those in the majority party of The Ohio General Assembly that hold that horrific mass murders, like the ones in the last two weeks in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas, are a result of mental illness, and not the easy access to assault weapons. In both of these two terrible events armed officers on the scene could not stop the assailant.

If officers with 160 hours of training fail, how do you expect classroom teachers with 22 hours of training to be successful in stopping an active shooter, and if, its mental illness that is the main problem, then why aren't we pouring tax dollars into much needed additional counselors and social workers?

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. 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.

Respectfully,
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