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Reject Ohio HB 99: Gutting Safety Training for Armed Teachers in Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Bottom Line: The gun lobby is pushing dangerous legislation in Ohio that would drastically reduce safety training requirements for teachers who carry loaded handguns inside elementary, middle and high schools. Lawmakers should put the safety of their constituents first and reject HB 99.

- HB 99 would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law.
 - Under current state law, all armed school employees—including teachers, security guards, and special police—must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer.¹ Basic peace officer training is regulated by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and comprises approximately 728 hours of instruction.
 - But HB 99 would exempt teachers from this requirement and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 8 hours of concealed carry training (6 of which can be completed online).
 - There is **no amount of training** that makes it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. HB 99 would worsen an already-dangerous situation by gutting the training Ohio law currently requires and allowing teachers to carry guns in schools without extensive safety training.
 - **The recent tragedy in Uvalde Texas demonstrates the uselessness – indeed, the danger – of arming guards or teachers on campus.**
- Arming teachers introduces new risks into schools.
- Teachers and law enforcement oppose allowing guns in schools. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation’s two largest teachers’ organizations, oppose arming teachers.² **We trust educators with our children’s lives and wellbeing. We must trust their opposition to these measures.**
 - 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.³ **Again, the experience of Uvalde demonstrates that law officers are not willing to take on these risks.**
- The focus on arming school employees ignores the risks and consequences of bringing more guns onto school grounds. Introducing more guns in schools increases the risk of gun violence. There have been numerous incidents where a gun has been discharged by staff on school grounds.⁴ There have also been incidents where guns carried into schools were misplaced or stolen and later found in the hands of students.⁵ **As a family member who teaches children states: “I can’t keep them from shooting each other with a staple gun.”** Children are wily, curious, risk takers. They should not have unlicensed access to fire arms.
- Schools face new liability when they arm teachers. When several districts in Kansas sought to arm teachers, the insurance companies informed them that they would not insure such a

dangerous practice.⁶ In other instances, liability insurance providers have declined coverage to these schools while others have increased annual premiums, stretching already tight budgets.⁷

The costs of bills like these are legion. Who benefits? The gun lobby and manufacturers.

- The gun lobby uses fear of active shooter situations to justify these policies, but arming civilians is not an effective way to stop an active shooter. 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.**⁸ Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement officers in the country, those of the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators.⁹

¹¹ See ORC Ann. 109.78(D).

² Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, American Federation of Teachers, and National Education Association, "Keeping Our Schools Safe: A Plan for Preventing Mass Shootings and Ending All Gun Violence in American Schools," February 2020, <https://www.everytownresearch.org/school-safety-plan>.

³ NASRO, "NASRO Opposes Arming Teachers," February 22, 2018. Available here: <https://bit.ly/3cVbBxE>.

⁴ Alexandra Seltzer, Hannah Winston, and Olivia Hitchcock, "BREAKING: Man Arrested in 2013 Murder of Dreyfoos School Janitors," *The Palm Beach Post*, May 25, 2017, <https://pbpo.st/2RE4R8V>; Vanessa McCray, "Lithia Springs Teacher Who Shot Himself Identified," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, August 21, 2017, <https://on-ajc.com/2M6D42h>; Missy Schrott, "Officer Accidentally Discharges Weapon at George Washington Middle School," *Alexandria Times*, March 2018, <https://bit.ly/2BnC8zT>; Amy Larson, "Seaside High Teacher Accidentally Fires Gun in Class, Students Injured," *KSBW*, March 14, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Be9cub>.

⁵ David Harten, "Police: Jacksonville High Student Steals Gun from Teacher," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, January 17, 2012, <https://bit.ly/2V3psWX>; Roche Madden, "Police Find Teacher's Stolen Gun with Student," *Fox 2 Now*, October 25, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2S9hqy7>.

⁶ Michael Hiltzik, "One big problem with the idea of arming teachers: insurance companies won't play along, and for good reason." *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 2018, <https://lat.ms/2BkRxBb>.

⁷ Seven Yaccino, "Schools Seeking to Arm Employees Hit Hurdle on Insurance", July 7, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/08/us/schools-seeking-to-arm-employees-hit-hurdle-on-insurance.html>.

⁸ Brian A. Reaves, "State and Local Law Enforcement Training Academies, 2013" (US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, July 2016), <https://bit.ly/2pg0whl>.

⁹ Bernard D. Rostker et al., "Evaluation of the New York City Police Department Firearm Training and Firearm-Discharge Review Process" (RAND Corporation, 2008), <https://bit.ly/2U9bk0t>.