

Sara Given
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To the Members of the Committee,

I have been a teacher for 16 years. I started out as a Public Relations major at Ohio University in the Scripps School, but in my sophomore year I decided to change my major to music education because I wanted to look back on my life and know that I helped people. This financially questionable decision could be due to my Catholic upbringing, or my mother who taught Kindergarten in Youngstown, or maybe it was just naivety. Regardless, I am speaking today because we desperately need you to help us.

Since I am fortunate enough to have K-12 certification in music, I have had the pleasure of working with students from Kindergarten all the way up to high school. I have helped 6 year-olds tie their shoes, and 18 year-olds complete their scholarship applications - and like all of us in education, I have also conducted active shooter drills with all of them multiple times a year.

I will spare you a vivid description of how the students cry during these drills (not just the little ones), and instead ask that you work harder to find an effective long-term solution. Arming teachers is not a solution to this crisis. It is not reasonable or logical.

My district completed an active shooter training years ago during which we watched a graphic reenactment of the Columbine massacre as well as Army medic instructional videos so we knew how to pack a gunshot wound. During that training, a staff member asked our police department about the possibility of arming school staff. The officers responded that it was a terrible idea to arm school staff at all, and went on to list all of the ways it would put children and staff at greater risk. Teachers need to concentrate on teaching, they said, not constantly managing the security of their weapon. Teachers will be shot by first responders who see them holding a gun. Teachers do not have enough training to effectively counter an unknown threat while also protecting and managing their students. And lastly, students are not dumb, and the older ones will figure out which staff members are carrying thus quickly gain access to a weapon within the building. The police seemed adamant that not only would arming staff not solve this problem, it would likely make it much, much worse. I believe them.

HB 99 being offered as a solution today is not acceptable. Less training to handle a firearm around children is not acceptable. Assuming that a poorly trained staff member with a handgun will be a deterrent to someone on a suicide mission with high powered weaponry is not acceptable. Listen to teachers, listen to police officers, and most of all listen to common sense. This is not acceptable.

Sincerely,
Sara Given

