



**Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Written Opponent Testimony Sub. HB 99
Presented by
President, Cleveland Teachers Union
and First Vice President of Ohio Federation of Teachers
May 31 , 2022**

Chair Hoagland, Vice-Chair Johnson, ranking member, and members of the Veterans and Public Safety Committee, my name is Shari Obrenski, President of the Cleveland Teachers Union (CTU) and First Vice President Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers, paraprofessionals, school nurses, higher education staff and faculty, and public employees. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on amendments to HB 99.

There have been a dozen shootings involving an AR 15. Given recent events at Robb Elementary and other mass shootings it is very clear that arming teachers while active shooters have automatic weapons and body arm isn't the answer. Teachers should not have to bear this burden.

On Wednesday, October 10, 2007, a suspended student entered SuccessTech Academy, a now-closed Cleveland school, and shot two students and two teachers before turning the gun on himself. He was armed with two revolvers and a lot of ammunition. Michael Grassie, a social studies teacher, was shot in the chest when the student entered his classroom. A second teacher, David Kachadourian, was shot in the back of his shoulder while in the hallway evacuating his students. Thankfully, all of the victims survived this attack, though Mr. Grassie never returned to the classroom.

When this tragedy occurred in Cleveland, we knew that bringing more guns into our schools and arming our teachers and other educational staff was not the answer. Instead, we focused on helping our students learn how to deal with conflict, helped teachers and other educators deescalate tense situations, and continue to work to make our schools safe and welcoming environments for both students and educators.

We do not support arming teachers or staff. Fully and fairly funding our public schools would allow more school districts to hire appropriately trained School Resource Officers, without watering down current law.

In April 2021, when OFT previously testified in opposition to HB 99, OFT identified some simple and common sense changes that would mitigate the very dangerous risks this legislation poses. We are disappointed that the substitute bill only addressed one

concern, the one about transparency. OFT feels the House passed version actually made the bill more reckless.

Ohio already has laws for arming school employees. There is no need to weaken these provisions. Current law requires Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) to develop the training curriculum and length and sets standards for experience and training that are far more appropriate to the serious nature of carrying a firearm in an educational setting.

Sandy Hook teachers, who suffered extreme trauma from a school shooting that left 20 elementary school students and six staff members dead, definitively rejected the idea of arming teachers. Additionally, both the NEA and AFT, who represent millions of U.S. teachers unequivocally reject the notion of arming teachers and other educational staff.

It is ironic that at the same time many legislators are seeking to micromanage curriculum and reading assignments, there is also the effort to pass HB 99. Educators are being told we are not trusted to decide what to teach in the classroom, a job we study for and are licensed to do, but we are trusted to have loaded guns around children with far less training than is required to drive a car.

Please stop and listen to the educators and parents who have grave concerns about this legislation. We all want to keep our kids safe in school. Rather than passing a one-sided bill and opening the floodgates to allow more and more guns in school, which can be deadly in the wrong hands, you have an opportunity to bring people together and find consensus around improving school safety. Please take that opportunity.

This concludes my testimony and I welcome any questions.