

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
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Columbus, Ohio

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.

I am very concerned about HB 99 and am in strong opposition. I understand that the goal of HB99 is to keep Ohio's children safer, but in fact, it will do the opposite. 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.¹ The indisputable fact is that where there are more guns, there are more gun deaths.

As a Mother, Aunt and Grandmother, I am horrified that the Ohio General Assembly is continuing to push this bill. Teachers just want to teach. Our children want to learn in a safe environment. Ohio teachers are leaving a profession they once loved. They are leaving for various reasons, one being the Ohio legislators does not trust them to teach curriculum, however legislators trust them to carry a firearm. Teachers don't want the added responsibility, I am fully aware it is voluntary; however the teachers and parents do not want guns in a classroom period! They understand and live this truth. Where there are more guns, there are more deaths. The thought of this bill being considered is a slap in the face to every teacher, administrator and parent, shame on you.

Over the last couple weeks we watched as seniors were slaughtered at a local supermarket and children were slaughtered at an elementary school. Same type of weapon, security attempted to stop one and was killed. The other, breaks my soul to know trained personnel were not able to stop him as a babies continued to call for help. He killed 19 children and 2 adults. You expect a teacher with a handgun to take out a human with an AR-15? The logic doesn't add up. This is an unrealistic expectation.

¹<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/keeping-our-schools-safe-a-plan-to-stop-mass-shootings-and-end-all-gun-violence-in-american-schools/>

Keeping Ohio school children should safe most definitely does not include radically reducing the current training requirement for armed teachers. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that an armed teacher must have at least 20 years experience as an active duty peace officer or have completed Ohio Peace Officer Training. HB 99 would gut that training requirement down to only 22 hours. 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 you are hoping to protect. 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,

Shela Blanchard
Columbus, Ohio