

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Susanne Lane

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 have been a teacher for over 25 years and am in strong opposition to HB99. I understand that the goal of HB99 is to keep Ohio's children safer, but in fact, it is a short-sighted reaction that will do the opposite. This proposal does nothing to protect students from the severe and lasting trauma inflicted on them by a gunfight in their school. 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. What we need are proactive measures that will reduce the chances of an active shooter stepping foot into what should be a haven of safety for our students. 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

Keeping Ohio school children 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. Teaching is a full time job that requires thousands of decisions every day, and no amount of training will make it safe for teachers to carry guns in schools. 100% of school mass shooters have had a connection to the school. It is unrealistic to ask teachers to take care of a classroom full of terrified students while also shooting to kill an active shooter that very well could be a current or former student. Research shows that the shooting accuracy of highly trained police is significantly reduced in high stress situations like an active shooter. Which child will be hit by a teacher's stray bullet? 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.

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

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,

Susanne Lane