

Testimony on House Bill 99
Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee

Submitted by:
Tony D'Ambrosio

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.

My name is Tony D'Ambrosio. I am an Ohio citizen and registered voter from Ohio House District 28. I am submitting this testimony to express my concerns with the potential passing of this legislation. I have three children that have all experienced active shooter drills and we as a family are acutely aware of the threat of gun violence on school campuses. I, like all parents, am always concerned about their safety.

In researching the topic, I have found that many teachers and school safety experts oppose allowing guns in schools. The American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, the nation's two largest teachers' organizations, oppose allowing guns in schools. The federal government's chief legal, law enforcement, public health, education, and emergency management agencies all agree that allowing civilians to carry guns in schools is not a sound security practice. In reviewing information regarding firearms training, I have discovered that 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.

In Ohio, Basic peace officer training is regulated by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission and comprises approximately 728 hours of instruction. In states with laws aimed at arming school personnel, school staff receive significantly less or no training. Even some of the most highly trained law enforcement in the country, the New York City Police Department, see their ability to shoot accurately decrease significantly when engaged in gunfights with perpetrators. 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. Ohio House Bill 99 would exempt teachers from this requirement and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 22 hours of concealed carry training. This leads me to the conclusion that arming educators with minimal training and experience is inappropriate, dangerous, and will not lead to the desired outcome of reduced victims of gun violence in schools.

As with many issues, primary prevention is often the best approach to mitigate unwanted outcomes. Some examples include Extreme Risk laws, secure gun storage laws, closing the loopholes for background checks on all gun sales, raising the age to purchase semiautomatic firearms to 21, public awareness campaigns about secure gun storage, providing access to school mental health professionals, implementing physical security upgrades to prevent access to schools and classrooms via access control and internal door locks. These are just a few ways in which to address gun violence on school campuses. The extraordinary number of responsibilities that teachers and schools bear has been pointed out frequently in research related to teacher stress and burnout.

We need to be mindful of the additional burden that such an intervention could have on schools and their staff. Adding the responsibility of possessing, safely managing, and potentially discharging a firearm in a highly charged situation is an undue burden. Not to mention the possibility of an accidental discharge, loss or theft of the firearm, improper use, or mistakenly being identified by law enforcement as a “bad guy with a gun” in a chaotic active shooter situation. Arming teachers is not the right solution to preventing gun violence in schools. Arming teachers with grossly inadequate training will likely lead to unintended gun violence with devastating, irrevocable consequences. Arming teachers *will not* make me feel my children are safer in school. Arming teachers *will* increase the likelihood of gunfire on

school campuses. 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,

Tony D'Ambrosio, Sycamore Twp., Ohio