

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
Mimi Karon

Chair Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present testimony in opposition to SB 317. Research shows us that guns in schools do not keep children safer but in fact, make them less safe. I also believe our common sense and articles we have all read in newspapers on this topic can tell us this very same thing. Citizens like me elect and then depend on lawmakers like yourselves to do what it takes to enable all Ohio's children to be protected from gun violence. I am unsure as to why this bill even exists. I truly hope all of you are wondering the same and will vote a unanimous no when that time comes. It is hard for me to really fathom that you would feel comfortable having your children in a school with a teacher carrying a loaded gun without extensive training. Conversely, if you were a school teacher and there was an active shooter do you think you would be able to shoot your target with other students around, under major stress and chaos and guarantee that no innocent lives, especially children's, would be taken? I sure could not. It's an outrageous idea. If you truly care about the safety of students then do what has proven to be most effective, year in and year out in diminishing gun violence. Sponsor bi-partisan bills on background checks (on all gun sales) as well as red flag laws and vote them into law.

While common sense should tell you carrying a loaded gun in a school is dangerous, all the reading I've done on the subject says the same: extensive training is an absolute must. A key finding in a report conducted by Mount St. Mary's University and the National Gun Victims Action Council (July, 2015) states "If you're going to rely on a gun for self-defense, you should know how to handle and use it." It goes on to say that "safe and effective firearms usage requires mental preparation; legal knowledge; judgemental awareness; as well as firearm expertise, skill and familiarity." According to an article in Time Magazine, put out right after the Dayton shooting (August, 2019), Stanford Law Professor John Donahue, whose research focuses on gun violence and policy stated "Unless you're very well-trained, you usually add more to the body count than you subtract." In his November 7, 2017 article in The Federalist, "If You Choose to Carry a Gun For Self-Defense, Proper Training is Essential," Kyle E. Lamb, who spent more than 21 years with the US Army, mostly in Special Operations wrote, "If your only firearms education is what the state requires before it issues a carry permit, I can tell you beyond the shadow of a doubt you don't have enough training." No sources that I came across in addition to the ones above told me anything conflicting with this opinion.

As elected officials I know you to take your position quite seriously. I hope your gut would tell you this bill is wrong and dangerous. Let law enforcement handle this job as it falls under their capabilities, training and responsibilities. Leave education to teachers as it falls under their capabilities, training and responsibilities. And start supporting and voting for bills that will actually keep school children and teachers safe because that falls under your responsibility. Please vote NO on SB 317. It will kill children. Thank you.

Mimi Karon