

Testimony on Senate Bill 317
Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Submitted by:
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My name is Pat Krummrich and I strongly oppose SB 317.

Once again, this committee has chosen the worst possible moment to try and push SB 317 through. While the images of Kyle Rittenhouse, a 17 year old child, strolling down the street with a long gun strapped over his chest, fill our TV screens, this committee seems determined to put MORE guns in our schools, this time in the hands of adults with little to no firearm safety, where children and teens can get hold of them. What a thrill it appeared to be for Kyle to be playing "militia", what a fun game it is for a 5 year old to grab a gun from a police officer's holster, and what a curious thing to see a gun left by a teacher on the counter in the school bathroom... what 8 year old wouldn't want to check out such forbidden treasure!

While this bill would give school districts the option to arm school staff with little to no firearm training, School Peace Officers would continue to be (rightly) required to have 700+ hours of training or years of experience. As a parent, I can understand that some districts may choose to have a well trained school peace officer as part of their safety plan. At least under current law, we know that if an adult is armed in the school, they have had extensive weapons and crisis response training. Why would anyone believe that a math teacher, coach or custodian would magically be better equipped than a police officer to handle a deadly weapon and therefore require less training?

And in this explosive time of racial tension, when even well trained policemen are under tremendous strain between trying to do their job but also trying to be fair to minority people (who are 5 x more likely to be shot by police) is it reasonable to place our teachers in those situations too? Without adequate training? The teachers I know say "NO" in large numbers. If we think the unrest in our cities is bad, wait till some school personnel shoot students out of a perception that the child is a threat and it turns out to be the wrong choice. Parents, don't send your son to school in a hoodie, especially if he has dark skin.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises that the safest home for a child is one without guns. AAP reports that a gun in the home is 43 times more likely to be used to kill a friend or family member than a burglar or other criminal. So until there is evidence to the contrary, we must assume that having a gun in the school makes it much more likely that the weapon will be used in an accidental shooting, suicide or even homicide. No longer can parents try to safeguard their child from gun violence by keeping guns out of the home, their child can just get a gun at school!

There is no evidence that poorly trained civilians are effective in stopping an armed shooter situation. On the other hand, there have been more than 90 publicly reported incidents of mishandled guns at schools in the last five years, including instances where staff accidentally discharged their guns, sometimes injuring themselves or children, or have allowed their gun to fall into the hands of a student.

I have heard members of this committee state that we cannot use a “one size fits all” approach to setting training standards for teachers to carry guns. Yet we have minimum state age requirements for buying a gun; for graduating high school; for training of doctors, teachers, nurses; for driver’s licenses. That’s why we have a state constitution and a state government. If the state of Ohio, abdicates its responsibility to protect our children on this issue, it will provide cover for Ohio school districts to choose the cheapest path, arming teachers with minimal to no training. Parents will be forced to send our children to school worrying more about the real possibility of a gun being discharged in their classroom than the danger of a mass shooter. Districts will be able to brush off parent's fears by saying, "Our safety policy meets state standards", which will be no standard at all.

Please understand that if you push this bill through during this chaotic time of COVID and racial unrest, you will face enormous voter outcry and backlash.

Thank you for your attention,
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