

Dear Senator Coley,

My name is Lindsay Wissman and I am an Ohio voter living in Valley View, OH. I have a three-year-old daughter who (hopefully, if COVID can be managed) will be starting preschool next fall. My mother is a retired high school guidance counselor (Copley-Fairlawn School District), and her mother before her was a lifelong teacher and a Jennings Scholar in the Akron Public School District.

It's through this lens that I'm writing to you today—to express concern about SB 317.

SB 317 would allow teachers to carry loaded guns in Ohio elementary, middle, and high schools. If that weren't concerning enough, they'd be able to do so without completing the safety training required by current Ohio law. Under current state law, all armed school employees—including teachers, security guards, and special police—must either complete an approved basic peace officer training course, or have completed 20 years of active duty as a peace officer.

But this bill would exempt teachers from this requirement, and allow school districts to employ armed personnel in schools with as little as 8 hours of concealed carry training (6 of which can be completed online)—or with no training at all, if firearms are not concealed when carried.

I shouldn't have to explain why this is a terrifying proposition. I shouldn't have to tell you that having loaded weapons in the hands of people with little to no training around hundreds of children eight hours a day, five days a week is such a horrible idea.

In the event that I actually do need to explain this (because it would appear that I do, since you've introduced this bill), let me remind you of a few things:

1. Children are curious. They pick up guns all the time, and have many times unintentionally fired the weapon and either hurt or killed someone.
2. There is nothing in this bill that would force or even encourage the teachers to store the weapon safely while on school grounds. The gun can be on their person, in an unlocked desk drawer, or carelessly discarded on a desk. (If you think no one would be so careless, please refer to this list of times guns have been mishandled on school grounds: <https://giffords.org/blog/2020/03/every-incident-of-mishandled-guns-in-schools-blog/>)
3. There is absolutely no data or evidence to suggest that having guns around children keeps them safer.

This bill is not founded in scientific data or facts. In no way will it keep Ohio children safer. And at a time when we're already concerned about children returning to school amid the coronavirus, it's frankly appalling to me that we are still discussing such a dangerous bill.

Please consider tabling this legislation. It will not keep our children safer.

Thank you,
Lindsay Wissman