

Testimony on House Bill 99

House Criminal Justice Committee

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Submitted by:

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Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 99.

I am a grandmother of four children who attend Chardon schools, where a student used a gun to kill and injure fellow students in 2012. The daughter of a fellow employee was injured when the shooter's bullet grazed her. The best friends of the son of another fellow employee were killed and maimed – my friend's son sat at that table in the cafeteria with the victims every day, but his mom kept him home from school that day because he was sick, likely saving his life. Over the years, I have heard from my friend about the impact this crime had on his kids and their friends. There are no words to describe how I feel about this threat that hangs over the heads of our children, and does not exist in other countries where my friends raise their kids without “active shooter drills.” We have a serious problem in our country. We need to figure out a way out of this nightmare. We need to find solutions that work, as other countries have done.

I strongly feel that arming untrained teachers is not an option that will improve this situation. An armed teacher, poorly trained or otherwise, would not have prevented the 2012 school shooting and the harm that one armed student inflicted on those students, their families, and the community.

I am opposed to arming teachers in general. In so many cases, we already ask teachers to act as more than educators. We ask them to carry a heavy burden in our society. Are we going to add to this, asking them to play the role of law enforcement, and armed security guard? And without training? This is not appropriate. A much better option is to have a fully trained specialist, such as a School Safety Officer, who is required to have the full training of a peace officer.

To make matters worse, there is this idea that a teacher requires no training at all if the firearm is not concealed. I do not want our kids exposed to teachers walking around armed. I have traveled in a country where armed guards were ubiquitous. In the airport, as we pulled into our hotel, at checkpoints we passed when traveling down major roads. It was unnerving. Something we are not accustomed to in America. Why do we seem so interested in building this kind of life here in our country? This is not the world I grew up in – guns everywhere you look, the sound of gunfire in the background all the time.

The answer to gun violence is not arming more people, with everyone carrying a gun. There is plenty of evidence that more guns don't equal less violence. Arming untrained teachers will make injury and death more likely, not less likely, and also will put in danger the REAL first responders, our law enforcement officers who must arrive at a chaotic scene and quickly take control of the situation. This will make their job more difficult.

School personnel who are armed must be fully trained to the MINIMUM of the Ohio Peace Office Training Commission. They must also be fully trained on de-escalation and on working with kids.

Therefore, I oppose HB 99.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Weinbrecht