

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Tryon Thompson and I am currently a teacher at Tualatin High School where I have taught history, as well as an elective course on the history of war, for the last 13 years. Mr. Spencer, my colleague at Tualatin High, referenced the single incidence in which a weapon was used at my school; ~~it should be noted that this was not a firearm,~~ and I would reiterate that our SRO's, the police officers that are in our school, handled the event with great professionalism.

I am a member of the NRA as well as at a gun club where police train. I shoot regularly and will teach my young sons how to shoot when they are an appropriate age. I am comfortable with guns and own several.

I also come here today to support Senate Bill 347 which allows school districts to retain the option to bar weapons on school grounds.

I understand that after the latest string of high profile tragedies involving the use of firearms, especially inside of a school, our society is struggling with how to address student safety and prevent such tragedies from occurring again. Allowing educators to be armed is not the answer.

While I feel that I am proficient in the use of firearms, I am not trained to use them in a combat situation where I would be required to engage another armed individual. I am especially not trained to do so in the midst of an over-crowded school or classroom. While one may make the argument that I could be trained to do so, this would involve not just an initial course but continuous training so that in the event of a shooter entering my building I would be able to act on instinct in the extremely narrow time frame within which I would have to act. To do this effectively would take me out of the classroom regularly and so make me something other than a teacher. I would become a hybrid, a part time police officer. I doubt I would be able to fulfill either role well. In addition, it would drain much needed resources in order to provide a small potential margin of safety for a situation that is exceedingly rare. It would be a very expensive insurance policy.

I too have discussed this with my students. None feel that my having a firearm would make them safer. Most students did not believe that a gun in the classroom would be a deterrent or an additional layer of safety. All students felt it would make them nervous. Our goal as educators is to make students feel safe so that they may engage in learning. This would not be possible if students were afraid that a gun may be used at any moment of any day.

It seems hypocritical for our school to enforce a no-tolerance policy for weapons on school grounds while allowing adults who are not police to carry loaded weapons. Allowing more weapons on campus would not further our mission. It would not increase the safety of the children that come to our schools every day. It would not give peace of mind to parents to know that a gun was present in their child's classroom and in the hands of a person whose profession did not involve the use of that weapon.

Every day we have students who are in need of help who would benefit greatly from an increase in mental health resources at our schools. A school psychologist would be a more potent tool to deal with those students who may be at risk of acting out in a way that could cause harm to others. Allowing me

or any other teacher to have weapon at school would do nothing for these young people. We would send the signal that we do not wish to treat their pain but instead wish to be prepared to shoot.

As a parent I understand well the desire to protect our children, the need to know that they are safe when we are not there. Schools remain one of the safest places for our children to be. A teacher's job is to help foster that safety, to help guide young people along the path to adulthood, to give them knowledge and skills so that they can be productive and happy members of our society. The teacher's job is not to use weapons to neutralize threats. We have professionals who are already trained to do that. Thank you very much for your time.