

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA

MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING
140 MAJORITY CAUCUS ROOM

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2018
9:05 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
SCHOOL SAFETY

BEFORE:

HONORABLE DAVID S. HICKERNELL, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE ROSEMARY M. BROWN
HONORABLE HAROLD A. ENGLISH
HONORABLE MINDY FEE
HONORABLE MARK M. GILLEN
HONORABLE SETH M. GROVE
HONORABLE HARRY LEWIS, JR.
HONORABLE BERNIE O'NEILL
HONORABLE KRISTIN PHILLIPS-HILL
HONORABLE THOMAS J. QUIGLEY
HONORABLE MIKE REESE
HONORABLE CRAIG T. STAATS
HONORABLE WILL TALLMAN
HONORABLE MIKE TOBASH

* * * * *

Debra B. Miller
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BEFORE (continued):

HONORABLE JAMES R. ROEBUCK, JR., DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE CAROL HILL-EVANS
HONORABLE MARK LONGIETTI
HONORABLE MAUREEN E. MADDEN
HONORABLE STEPHEN McCARTER
HONORABLE DAN L. MILLER
HONORABLE GERALD J. MULLERY

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE KAREN BOBACK
HONORABLE PERRY S. WARREN

COMMITTEE STAFF PRESENT:

NICHOLE DUFFY
MAJORITY SENIOR EDUCATION ADVISOR
MICHAEL BIACCHI
MAJORITY ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BENJAMIN CLEAR
MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST
CHRISTINE SEITZ
MAJORITY RESEARCH ANALYST
CATHY O'DONNELL
MAJORITY LEGISLATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

CHRIS WAKELEY
DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ERIN DIXON
DEMOCRATIC RESEARCH ANALYST
APRIL McCLENTON
DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

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SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 * * *

3 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Good morning,
4 everyone. Thank you for joining us this morning for this
5 hearing of the House Education Committee. I would like to
6 call the meeting to order.

7 I would mention that we are not only being
8 recorded this morning, but we're also being live-streamed
9 on the Web. So everybody, particularly the Members, you
10 know, be conscious of that and try to be on your best
11 behavior this morning.

12 My name is Dave Hickernell. I chair the
13 Committee. I represent the 98th District of Lancaster and
14 Dauphin Counties. And at this time, I would like to ask
15 the Members to introduce themselves and tell us where
16 they're from.

17 Chairman Roebuck.

18 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 Representative Jim Roebuck, the 188th Legislative
21 District, the city of Philadelphia.

22 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Good morning, everyone.
23 Thanks for being here.

24 My name is Craig Staats, and I represent the
25 145th District in Bucks County.

1 REPRESENTATIVE LEWIS: Good morning, everyone.

2 My name is Harry Lewis. I'm the Representative
3 from the 74th District in Chester County.

4 REPRESENTATIVE O'NEILL: Top of the morning to
5 you all, and happy Saint Patrick's Day early.

6 My name is Bernie O'Neill -- O'Neill -- and I
7 represent the 29th District in Bucks County.

8 REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Good morning, everyone.

9 My name is Mike Reese. I represent the
10 59th Legislative District, which includes portions of both
11 Westmoreland and Somerset Counties.

12 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Will Tallman, parts of
13 Adams and Cumberland Counties. And just to let the
14 Chairman know, I already abused the State Police Major.

15 REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Good morning.

16 I'm Representative Maureen Madden. I represent
17 the 115th District in Monroe County.

18 REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Carol Hill-Evans,
19 representing the mighty 95th in York County. Thank you all
20 for being here.

21 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Good morning.

22 Rosemary Brown, the 189th District, Monroe and
23 Pike Counties.

24 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Representative
25 Tom Quigley from the 146th District in Montgomery County.

1 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Good morning.

2 Kristin Phillips-Hill, representing the
3 93rd District in southern York County.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Seth Grove, the
5 196th District, York County.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Good morning.
7 Hal English, Allegheny County.

8 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Good morning.
9 Steve McCarter, the 154th District in Montgomery
10 County.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Mark Gillen, the
12 128th Legislative District, Berks and Lancaster Counties.

13 REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Good morning.
14 Mark Longietti. I represent the 7th District in
15 Mercer County.

16 REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Good morning, everyone.
17 Gerry Mullery, the 119th District in Luzerne
18 County.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WARREN: Good morning.
20 I'm Perry Warren. I represent the 31st District
21 in Bucks County.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Dan Miller, the
23 42nd District, Allegheny County.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you,
25 Members. We have a great representation of Members today.

1 I know there are several Members who had other
2 commitments this morning and they'll be coming in late. I
3 will try to recognize them as they come in.

4 While the shooting incident in Florida has pushed
5 the issue of school safety to the forefront of discussions
6 across the country, the fact is that Members of the General
7 Assembly in Pennsylvania are always striving to improve the
8 safety of our children. In fact, legislation regarding the
9 school safety had been introduced prior to that tragic
10 event, and we will be looking at some of those measures
11 today.

12 This hearing is meant to take a holistic view of
13 the issue, allowing us to hear what the Commonwealth
14 currently does, what school organizations believe would be
15 more effective, what other States have done, and views of
16 different stakeholder approaches to enhancing school safety
17 in Pennsylvania.

18 As we all know, we live in a very diverse State.
19 When your communities stretch from the mouth of the
20 Delaware Bay to the shores of Lake Erie, there is rarely a
21 one-size-fits-all approach.

22 I want to make it clear that this forum is not a
23 day to discuss Second Amendment rights, and discussions
24 around firearms should be limited to their role as it
25 relates to school safety. I would note that in the weeks

1 ahead, the House Judiciary Committee will be holding a
2 series of four hearings on public safety, gun laws, and
3 violence.

4 We have many witnesses that have graciously made
5 themselves available to the Committee today, and it will
6 take some time to cover all the information and testimony
7 before us. So I want to ask everyone to keep their remarks
8 to the subject matter at hand, and if someone strays off
9 topic, I will call order and steer the discussion back on
10 track.

11 It is our hope that through thoughtful
12 discussions, like those happening here today, and in-depth
13 review of current law, policy, and research, we can
14 determine if further legislative actions need to be taken,
15 and if so, what those actions include.

16 Because of our limited time today, we were not
17 able to accommodate all of the organizations and
18 individuals who expressed interest in offering testimony.
19 However, anyone who contacted us was encouraged to submit
20 written testimony for distribution to Committee Members.

21 Most of that testimony is contained in your
22 packets, Members, and others who have submitted testimony,
23 and certainly will submit in the days ahead, we will get
24 that testimony out to all the Members.

25 At this time, I would recognize Chairman Roebuck

1 for remarks.

2 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 I certainly want to thank those who are here
5 today for this discussion of school safety.

6 School safety, it seems to me, is a basic right
7 that all students should be able to go to school in a safe
8 environment and be able to take advantage of the
9 opportunity to learn and not do that in fear.

10 Certainly this effort we make today is part of a
11 very necessary dialogue given the events of the last weeks,
12 and I hope that it is the beginning of a dialogue that will
13 lead forward to broader discussions and, ultimately, to
14 solutions to the concerns that we now address. And I look
15 forward to that continuing dialogue, and I thank those who
16 are going to give testimony and those who are here.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you,
19 Chairman.

20 Before I introduce our first panel, I would ask
21 the panelists, I know you have spent a lot of time on your
22 written testimony. You are certainly free to read that, if
23 you would like. If you would like to summarize that, that
24 normally goes over very well with our Members. It also
25 gives Members an opportunity to ask more questions.

PANEL I:

CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOL SAFETY

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: So at this time, I'll introduce our first group of panelists. We have Matt Stem, Deputy Secretary from the Department of Education; we have Major Douglas Burig from the Pennsylvania State Police; and we have Jeff Thomas from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

And gentlemen, when you're ready, you may proceed. I assume, Matt, are you going first?

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I believe that's correct.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Okay. You may begin. Thank you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Thank you.

So thank you to Chairman Hickernell, Chairman Roebuck, and all the Representatives on the Committee for the opportunity to be here today and speak on behalf of PDE.

I'll begin with my written remarks, but I probably will move forward just a little bit more quickly to allow more time for questions and answers.

But as was said, I'm Matthew Stem, Deputy Secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

1 And our agency performs many functions in support of
2 teaching and learning in the Commonwealth, and paramount
3 among them is ensuring the safety of the 1.74 million
4 students that we serve.

5 Like others, the Department is saddened by the
6 tragic events that have occurred in schools across the
7 country. As a department of former educators,
8 administrators, and parents, many of us reflect after each
9 tragedy about our time in schools and what measures we can
10 put into place to continue to improve the way that we serve
11 students. Student safety is at the heart of everything we
12 do, because without a feeling of security, students cannot
13 thrive academically, socially, or emotionally.

14 The remainder of the remarks that I have here
15 really speak to the role of the Department and how we serve
16 our 1.74 million students. We know that our school
17 administrators have a significant responsibility in
18 ensuring parents that when they bring their students to
19 school each day, they can trust that they're going to be
20 able to pick them up at the end of the day healthy and
21 well, and there is nothing more important that our teachers
22 and administrators do.

23 At the Department, we support schools to create
24 the conditions that allow them to provide safe schools for
25 their students, including prevention efforts, response

1 planning, and recovery planning. But one of the themes
2 that you'll notice in our written testimony is we really
3 want to underscore not only how important response planning
4 is as reflected in our emergency response plans the
5 districts create, but also how critically important
6 prevention is.

7 And our office leads many efforts and provides
8 much professional development around things such as
9 anti-bullying activities, student assistance programs and
10 the like, school climate leadership, schoolwide positive
11 behavior supports, because we recognize that at its core,
12 these sorts of issues don't happen overnight, and it's the
13 relationships that administrators and teachers build with
14 students that are the best prevention to avoiding
15 tragedies, the like we have seen recently.

16 And then the other theme that is highlighted in
17 our written testimony is the importance of collaboration.

18 School safety is a community issue, not just a
19 schools issue, and this is something that our educators
20 can't do in isolation, and they need their partners in
21 local law enforcement and emergency management to work
22 alongside of them and bring their expertise and skills to
23 the school setting. And we have seen how in recent years,
24 those collaborative efforts among those agencies,
25 across agency, have greatly improved over the past 10 or

1 20 years what we do in schools.

2 And again, I was an educator. I started my
3 teaching career in 1993, and I can tell you that 25 years
4 ago, our efforts were not even remotely what we have seen
5 today, but we can and must continue to do better. And at
6 PDE, we appreciate the collaboration that we have with
7 agencies, including the Pennsylvania State Police; PEMA,
8 the Pennsylvania Emergency Management; the Department of
9 Human Services; the Department of Health, and others who
10 work alongside of us at the State level to help us in
11 support of our schools.

12 So that summarizes the written testimony that we
13 have, and again, we really appreciate the opportunity to be
14 here and speak with our colleagues on really the paramount
15 issue for our schools.

16 Thank you.

17 MAJOR BURIG: Good morning, Chairmen Hickernell
18 and Roebuck and Members of the House Education Committee.
19 We thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this
20 very important discussion about keeping students and staff
21 members safe in our schools.

22 My name is Major Douglas Burig. I am the
23 Director of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation for the
24 Pennsylvania State Police. We are committed to protecting
25 all Pennsylvanians and have been actively engaged in a

1 variety of programs intended to counter the threat posed by
2 active shooters and to improve response to critical
3 incidents in our educational facilities.

4 The training of law enforcement officers to
5 rapidly and effectively respond to an active shooter
6 event and end the threat is critically important. It can
7 have a substantial impact on the ultimate outcome of the
8 event.

9 PSP members initially received this type of
10 training in the early 2000s after the Columbine school
11 shootings, and it has continued thereafter. But over a
12 2-year period, between 2012 and 2014, every PSP first
13 responder received updated active shooter training, which
14 included realistic scenarios, including role players.

15 Additionally, all PSP cadets obtain this training
16 before their graduation from the Academy. Our Bureau of
17 Emergency and Special Operations has also provided this
18 training to local police officers throughout the
19 Commonwealth.

20 One of our department's priorities is to provide
21 training to school district administrators and staff
22 regarding the active shooter threat. And just in 2017
23 alone, between our community service officers and other
24 PSP members, we conducted 364 active shooter presentations
25 to thousands of attendees on this topic.

1 These presentations included recognition of
2 warning signs that might be indicative of someone
3 progressing towards violence and guidance about what
4 actions to take if an active shooter enters their facility.
5 Most of these presentations were given specifically to
6 educators and school district administrators.

7 Another service that PSP offers is our
8 Risk Vulnerability Assessment Teams, or RVAT. But RVAT
9 consists of a team of Troopers who are specially trained
10 and certified to provide on-site security assessments.

11 RVAT members conduct an in-depth review of the
12 entire facility, including access controls, camera
13 coverage, and communication protocols, and in turn, they
14 provide a very detailed report to the administrators
15 containing recommendations to enhance their security
16 posture.

17 These recommendations are based on their
18 training, established industry standards, and include the
19 best practices utilized by other schools. But since
20 January of 2016, PSP has completed 147 RVAT assessments,
21 which the vast majority were conducted at our schools.

22 Another critical component is the regular
23 interaction of sharing of information between law
24 enforcement and school district administrators. In the
25 field, our stations conduct annual response drills and

1 tabletop exercises with schools in their respective
2 coverage areas to prepare for any critical incident.

3 Our primary designated intelligence fusion
4 center, PaCIC, has a full-time critical infrastructure
5 protection unit that regularly sends written briefs and
6 alerts to partners in hundreds of school districts across
7 the Commonwealth, answers requests for information from
8 these schools, and helps law enforcement conduct
9 investigations at those facilities.

10 We will continue to work with school officials
11 and partners across all disciplines to ensure children and
12 staff members will be safe in our schools, and I look
13 forward to answering any questions the Committee might have
14 for me.

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Good morning,
16 Chairman Hickernell and Chairman Roebuck. Thank you for
17 the opportunity.

18 I'm Jeff Thomas. I'm the Executive Deputy
19 Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

20 So we're a fairly small agency with a pretty big
21 mission. Our job is to coordinate the State agency
22 response and help the counties and the local municipalities
23 to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies,
24 whether they be man-made emergencies or natural disasters.

25 Part of our requirements under Title 35 are to

1 provide planning tools for not only the counties but
2 also the schools in Pennsylvania, and to accomplish this,
3 we work with the 67 counties, we work with the 2,600
4 municipalities, and with the school districts.

5 We recently completed a grant program in
6 partnership with the Department of Education where we were
7 able to provide what I would call planning templates for a
8 basic school plan and emergency operations plans for
9 schools to every one of the schools in Pennsylvania.

10 Through that grant, we were able to provide
11 65 different classes across the State in a number of areas,
12 ranging everything from your basic emergency operations
13 plan for a school to plans that deal with student and
14 parent reunification. We had seen that was a gap. We
15 developed that program and we provided that program, and a
16 lot of the schools have taken advantage of this.

17 How I would make the analogy of this program is,
18 and I was talking to Major Burig before, so there's an
19 analogy to TurboTax. You have to do all of your work ahead
20 of time. The big EO deal with planning is, you need the
21 people in the room to talk about their threats. They
22 identify their threats. They do all of that work ahead of
23 time. Then the effort shouldn't be in how you organize it
24 into a document. That is not where your efforts should be.
25 It should be in your planning.

1 So the planning templates provide an easy way to
2 organize all of that information and make it available
3 Web-based, not just to the school districts but to the
4 first responders that may need that in times of an
5 emergency. That is available to every school and every
6 school district in Pennsylvania, including cyber schools
7 and parochial schools. You can contact your intermediate
8 unit, PEMA, or the Department of Education, and we can help
9 anybody that needs help with that.

10 I will tell you that one of the best practices is
11 in Philadelphia. Philadelphia has really, really taken
12 ahold of this. All 208 brick-and-mortar schools in
13 Philadelphia have used the tool and created plans, and now
14 all of their resource officers will have access to those
15 plans virtually, on mobile devices, for every one of those
16 schools.

17 So that is our contribution to this. We will
18 continue to help train folks. We'll continue to help
19 planning efforts with schools. And I really appreciate the
20 opportunity to be here today and would look forward to
21 answering any questions I can.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you,
23 gentlemen.

24 Questions from Members?

25 Chairman Roebuck.

1 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: It seems to me that
2 in part, the perception of what schools are has changed.

3 Schools, as I remember and I think most of us
4 remember, were always neutral turf. Whatever happened in
5 the community did not penetrate into the school building.
6 Now it seems as if the vision is erased, and things that
7 start in the community ultimately end up influencing
8 directly what happens in the school, and I wondered if you
9 might just comment on that.

10 And it also seems to me that the other part of
11 that is that we no longer teach students how to manage
12 anger and sort of put them on a road where if they have a
13 dispute, it doesn't lead ultimately to violence, but there
14 are ways in place that they can use or things in place or
15 procedures in place they can use to resolve their
16 differences without a resort to violence.

17 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure. So I'll make the
18 first response to both of those. Thank you, Chairman
19 Roebuck.

20 So the first issue in regards to community issues
21 that may or may not be finding their ways into schools, and
22 sort of a historical perspective.

23 I can tell you that anecdotally, you know,
24 notwithstanding some of the tragedies that have, you know,
25 rocked the nation and communities in recent years, schools

1 do, for the most part, remain a safe haven, even in areas
2 where we see high crime and violence. And I think
3 anecdotally, the good news is that most of our students
4 still do feel safe in their schools and feel that their
5 schools are one of the safest places to be, and I do think
6 there is data that plays some of that out.

7 But to your point around how we teach students to
8 resolve conflict, as an example, it's one of the reasons
9 why in recent years our schools, and the Department helps
10 lead some of these initiatives, and our IUs help provide
11 training around positive, schoolwide positive behavior
12 support systems. And this is where in schoolwide positive
13 behavior, the Tier 1 of instruction that everyone receives
14 is actually on how to build communities in schools, how to
15 build learning communities, and you are teaching students
16 how to interact with one another, how to collaborate and
17 how to communicate, how to resolve conflict. And it's very
18 important to the Department that we, you know, that we
19 continue to provide those sorts of supports and resources
20 to schools, because to your point, those are skills that we
21 shouldn't be taking for granted when students walk in the
22 door.

23 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
25 Quigley.

1 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today.

3 Major, I did have a question for you.

4 You know, as I look at the testimony of some of
5 the testifiers that are coming up after you, the subject of
6 teachers being armed in the classroom is on some of the
7 testimony here.

8 So the argument I hear sometimes from people is
9 that, and as it relates to western PA, central PA, areas
10 that are covered by the State Police, that response times
11 to an incident could be longer than let's say in an urban
12 setting or even a suburban setting.

13 So first, how would you respond to that. And
14 then secondly, could you give us, you know, a bigger
15 picture of what steps are taken or, you know, what would
16 response times be to some of these areas that are more in a
17 rural setting.

18 MAJOR BURIG: Certainly.

19 We cover 66 percent of the municipalities in
20 Pennsylvania either full time or part time. So Troopers
21 are spaced throughout the Commonwealth, and they don't sit
22 at the station and wait for a call to come in. There are
23 out in patrol zones. They are geographically dispersed.
24 And we also take a look at the data that comes in, the
25 crime data, to deploy our people effectively, to be closer

1 to where the crimes are most likely to occur, including
2 violent crime.

3 It would be very difficult to characterize
4 response time on a particular day or at a particular time.
5 Certainly some incidents will draw, a violent incident will
6 draw Troopers over to one area. So it's really tough to
7 characterize what the response time would be in a
8 particular, you know, geographic setting.

9 But I can say that our people, we work very
10 closely with our local partners, and certainly in an
11 incident that would occur at a school, particularly
12 anything involving an active shooter, law enforcement will
13 cooperate immediately and respond in unison.

14 The school shooting incident that I was involved
15 in, you know, involved the response of probably 25 police
16 departments almost simultaneously. So we would work very
17 closely and coordinate with the municipal agencies as
18 well.

19 As far as teachers being armed in school, it's
20 the position of our agency that trained professional police
21 officers are better suited to counter the active shooter
22 threat than an armed teacher.

23 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay. Thank you very
24 much.

25 MAJOR BURIG: Thank you, sir.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
2 Miller.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
4 and thank you for the testimony today.

5 Major, I did want to follow up with you. I
6 appreciate your testimony and your answer. It sort of
7 relates to the last question.

8 My thought or where part of my interest is in
9 this debate is towards the officers of all types who are in
10 the schools currently or who hopefully will be increased in
11 some fashion -- school police, school resource officers,
12 and school security officers as well.

13 I have a bill -- it's 2143, with Dom Costa -- and
14 one of the things we're looking to do is to try and add
15 some enhanced training requirements to school police,
16 school resource, and school security officers. In
17 particular with it, you mentioned the school shooting,
18 active shooter drills and so forth.

19 I thank you guys, by the way. I hear nothing but
20 good things regarding your department's involvement in
21 those. I appreciate it. Admittedly, I would say that it
22 is still a tragedy how much time is spent and how much our
23 children are exposed to that type of reality, but I
24 appreciate your involvement in offering security help along
25 that path.

1 My question, though, for you is that we clearly
2 have a myriad of patchwork in the State of Pennsylvania
3 regarding schools that have any one of those three types of
4 officers, a combination of those three types of officers,
5 or no officers across the board. Some of them are
6 dependent upon school security officers more than others.
7 Those tend to have, from what I understand, just Act 235
8 certification.

9 Can you offer some insight into the need or value
10 of more training for all three of those classes in relation
11 to increasing the amount of firearm training, child
12 psychology, mental health disability, traumatic training
13 awareness into kids with disabilities, looking to create
14 better communication. From what I even understand, these
15 school security officers aren't required to even have
16 first aid or CPR or anything along those lines.

17 What would you say in relation to those that
18 would be valuable, in your mind, to increase training for
19 school security officers of all types when they are
20 deployed full time into a school setting?

21 MAJOR BURIG: Thank you for those compliments
22 about our agency and our involvement in school safety.

23 Responding to an active shooter, it's an
24 incredibly complex and dynamic situation, and training is
25 critically important to make sure that we're going to be

1 successful to quickly interdict that threat and neutralize
2 it to minimize the carnage inside the schools.

3 Within law enforcement, you will not find a
4 law enforcement officer that hasn't received active shooter
5 training, either in their academy or post, because of the
6 environment that we're in now. Certainly that should,
7 anybody that is in schools to protect those students,
8 should receive training to counter this specifically.

9 In conjunction with that, we do have programs,
10 and I know our municipal police colleagues have different
11 training programs, to recognize behaviors that are
12 indicative of somebody progressing towards violence and to
13 understand mental health disabilities and people with other
14 types of disabilities and how to interact effectively with
15 them; for instance, autism. For example, there are
16 specific police training courses on how to effectively deal
17 with children that have autism.

18 So I think all of that is critically important
19 for anybody that is in the school working to protect
20 students, regardless if you are a school security officer,
21 a law enforcement officer, or whatever the case may be.

22 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Yeah. And one quick
23 follow-up with it, if I can.

24 And listen, I am sure that everyone here, we
25 would all agree that a mental health or a disability

1 diagnosis of any type, you're more likely to be a victim of
2 something than a perpetrator, so I appreciate the example
3 that you brought up.

4 But when you mention MPOETC or when you talk
5 about the training with it, what I'm understanding is that
6 that training that is done is not, when you have three
7 different classes of school security -- school police,
8 school resource, and school security officers -- not
9 everyone is currently under MPOETC as far as training
10 requirements.

11 I hear great things about MPOETC. My gut is, I
12 think we could do a little bit more in relation to those
13 who currently are. But how would we increase the training
14 for those officers who are not currently? If MPOETC, from
15 what I understand, is the gold standard, just fantastic.

16 One of the ideas in the bill is we're trying to
17 say, okay, if that's good, then why don't we get everybody
18 underneath that as far as some degree of training that is
19 done through MPOETC as required since you're in schools
20 doing that, a version of that job?

21 MAJOR BURIG: Right.

22 Well, certainly it would be a matter for this
23 body to decide what is mandated for people that are in
24 school, regardless of what your classification is --
25 security officer; sworn law enforcement officer.

1 And MPOETC, within MPOETC, the State Police
2 oversee that, and we make sure that those training
3 standards are effectively employed across everybody who has
4 that certification, so.

5 But I would go back to the training aspect of it.
6 It's critically important to being successful, and if
7 there's anything that can enhance training for those people
8 that are in the school -- a law enforcement officer; a
9 security officer -- it's going to benefit the students and
10 that district, without question.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: I would note that
12 Representative Mike Tobash has joined us. Good morning.

13 Representative Brown, a question?

14 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 And I hope -- I have three quick questions, so
16 I'll try to make them as quick as I can. Is that okay?
17 You can cut me off if you need to. Okay; okay.

18 Secretary Stem, thank you so much. It's good to
19 see you again. Thank you all for your testimony.

20 You are going to be the one for the three
21 questions that I have.

22 And I have to put a shout-out to Stroudsburg
23 School District, which is one of my local school districts
24 that yesterday did a "Who's Your 17" type of program
25 yesterday with the national effort around honoring the

1 victims, the 17 victims. But what they did was a
2 tremendous type of team-building activity inside the school
3 where they would speak to 17 kids maybe they didn't know
4 and try to build relationships among their peers. They did
5 team-building activities to, you know, try to get the kids
6 to speak and communicate with each other. So I really
7 thought they did a great job.

8 So it kind of follows up on the Chairman's
9 conversation, and something that I have been pretty
10 passionate about over the years is character education.
11 And I know you mentioned a little bit about what you
12 provide for the schools in our school standards, but can
13 you clarify just a little bit more on the character
14 education piece, and is there something that we should be
15 requiring a little bit more heavily within our schools with
16 that?

17 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure. Thank you for the
18 question.

19 So first, I'll echo the commendation for the way
20 that it sounds like Stroudsburg schools had handled the
21 situation.

22 A couple weeks ago, Secretary Rivera sent a
23 letter to all superintendents encouraging them to use this
24 opportunity to teach civil engagement, and it sounds like
25 that was a great way to turn a tragedy into a positive for

1 the students in that school.

2 In terms of character education, as I mentioned
3 before, we have a SAS portal online that all of our
4 educators in the field rely on as their central hub for
5 resources from the Department, and one of those areas of
6 the site is around safe and supportive schools. And within
7 there, we provide resources to schools, as I had mentioned,
8 around positive behavior support, as one particular
9 example.

10 In terms of character education, we also have a
11 team that is working right now on how to build sort of
12 social and emotional learning skills into career-ready
13 skills, because in Pennsylvania, we actually have a set of
14 career education work standards that were adopted by the
15 Board, the State Board, in 2006, and many of those skills,
16 believe it or not, in career education mirror the character
17 education skills that you would see like in social and
18 emotional learning standards.

19 So we actually have a team that is trying to
20 bridge those right now, and they have been working in
21 collaboration across departments, and even being informed
22 by outside stakeholders and other agencies. So we would be
23 very happy in the future to report out more information
24 around how those skills are coming together.

25 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: That's great. And I think

1 that hopefully as a legislative body and working with our
2 schools, I would like to definitely see more of that. I
3 think that is part of the prevention efforts that we talk
4 about.

5 The second question is a little bit related to
6 that. But in regards to the bullying aspect within our
7 schools and some of the abilities for the school districts
8 to be able to respond, is there something in the Federal
9 level as far as a privacy protection type that holds back
10 the school districts from dealing with bullying as far as
11 communications with both sides, with both families
12 involved? I have heard that from my school districts. I'm
13 not sure if you can offer some clarification on that.

14 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

15 So first, one of the areas that our schools
16 continue to invest energy in is around how they can best
17 address bullying in schools. And as I mentioned before, I
18 was an educator for 25 years. I'm dating myself by saying
19 when I first started as a teacher, there was no social
20 media. There were no cell phones. You know, my students
21 back then weren't carrying cell phones in their pocket, and
22 certainly not smartphones, and so the world has changed.

23 And bullying at that time, students used to be
24 able to get away from bullying because, you know, if there
25 was someone that had a bullying interaction, you would get

1 that separation when school would end or when you go home.
2 Nowadays what we're seeing in schools is that bullying is
3 following students wherever they go, because much of this
4 takes place online.

5 And I will say that our school counselors have
6 had to invest, and rightly so, a tremendous amount of
7 energy in working with students and families, specifically
8 in addressing cyberbullying in particular.

9 And so we provide at the Department, we have a
10 Bullying Prevention Toolkit that we had created a few years
11 ago, and with support from the Center for Safe Schools, and
12 I believe Highmark helped us with those efforts, and there
13 are other resources that we link to.

14 So as schools deal with these issues, they are
15 encouraged to talk to students and to talk to their
16 families, and in many cases, it's entirely appropriate to
17 involve both the victim and the one who is bullying and
18 both sets of parents.

19 There may be unique scenarios, though, where
20 there are Federal protections for a student; for example,
21 maybe a student with a disability who is engaged in a
22 certain behavior that would, you know, would call on some
23 of those protections. But we encourage students and
24 families to cooperate and collaborate, and we see good
25 things happen when everyone comes together.

1 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Okay. And I may follow up
2 with you on that a little bit more after.

3 Sometimes I had heard that a family, because they
4 can't be told what the disciplinary measures may be on a
5 child, you know, and on the other child, they don't feel
6 sometimes that it's being addressed. So maybe I'll follow
7 up with you a little bit more, and I can give that to the
8 Committee.

9 Mr. Chairman, one last one?

10 One last one. He's being good.

11 I do have legislation requiring metal detectors
12 at all entrances, so a primary entrance of a school, and
13 obviously based on the size of the school, you may need
14 more than one entrance. But the legislation does ask for
15 metal detectors at each primary entrance or main entrance.

16 At this point, I know there are school districts
17 that do have metal detectors. They range from urban
18 districts to some rural districts, but it has been more of
19 a sort of word-of-mouth of where they are. Do you know how
20 many school districts that we currently have or buildings
21 that we currently have metal detectors? And your thoughts
22 on that as well.

23 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

24 So, no, right now we don't have a specific count
25 on the number of metal detectors in schools. We do provide

1 grants for equipment through the Department as well as
2 programs, and we know that some districts have utilized
3 grant dollars to purchase metal detectors.

4 I think in response, I would echo what Chairman
5 Hickernell shared earlier. You know, these are community
6 issues, and so each community is going to work together and
7 do risk assessments, as the Major had shared, and identify
8 their specific risks and vulnerabilities. And some
9 communities are identifying that metal detectors are the
10 appropriate response for the risks that they see in their
11 schools, and other communities see different risks and
12 vulnerabilities.

13 So I think we would caution against, you know, a
14 one-size-fits-all approach towards what we would require of
15 our schools, but certainly would not limit schools who
16 believe that that's an appropriate way to address the risks
17 that their schools face.

18 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you.

19 And I will tell you, I believe for my district,
20 the anxiety is tremendous among students and parents.
21 This, by far, is something that they worry about every day.

22 And the reason for me putting that out was I
23 believe it's something that can truly help reduce the
24 anxiety of the parents, the teachers, the children, when
25 you have, you know, fifth graders extremely nervous; they

1 can't focus. And I think it's something we can do very
2 quickly to help our families, so.

3 But thank you so much for the answers to my
4 questions. Thank you.

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
6 Longietti.

7 REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Thank you all for your
8 testimony.

9 Well, we're certainly in a new era when it comes
10 to school safety, and I guess an initial question is, we
11 have the grant program, and we're thankful to have that,
12 but it's a competitive program, which means that some will
13 apply and not receive funds. And so my question is, is
14 there consideration for requesting additional resources
15 into those grant programs and making it a noncompetitive
16 program?

17 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: So I don't think at the
18 Department of Education we would ever bulk at additional
19 funding, particularly funding that's going directly out to
20 schools.

21 So we would be supportive of those efforts and
22 certainly would love the opportunity to provide additional
23 resources to schools, with the caveat in making sure that
24 it's for SROs, SPOs, equipment, but also for programs and
25 preventative programs, that districts would have the

1 ability to leverage those funds in all of those ways.

2 REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Okay. Thank you.

3 It just seems that \$6 ½ million for 500 school
4 districts, and I don't know how many school buildings,
5 isn't sufficient at this time.

6 The other question I have is to the State Police.
7 You talked about the Risk Vulnerability Assessment Team.
8 I'm grateful for that program as well. And you mentioned
9 147 schools have had an on-site assessment since January of
10 2016.

11 It seems to me, once again, we are in a new era
12 where I think every school should have an on-site risk
13 assessment. Any thought towards -- I don't know how you do
14 your outreach. Any thought towards actual outreach to
15 school districts in trying to develop a schedule? And I
16 know the State Police is already stretched thin, but it
17 seems like we're in that era.

18 MAJOR BURIG: Well, through many of the programs
19 that I have described, we're regularly communicating with
20 the school districts. And the touchpoint at the local
21 level is our community services officers. They are the
22 ones that are conducting these drills with the schools,
23 evaluating their school security plans, and doing the
24 actual drills, whether it's tabletop or it's a functional
25 drill.

1 And as part of that, we avail all the State
2 Police resources, whether it's bringing the Troopers on
3 site at the school while the children are arriving. Some
4 schools have even been progressive enough to give us office
5 space in their schools, particularly ones that are in
6 further reaches of the county or less populated areas for
7 the Troopers to do administrative duties. We have parked
8 random vehicles in front of schools so that students know
9 that the State Police are there. So there's this constant
10 communication, and they are certainly aware of the
11 resources and what an RVAT assessment can do.

12 Also, we're a big supporter of PEMA's school
13 assessment tool, the All-Hazards tool. And in every RVAT
14 assessment and our pre-assessment and what the community
15 service officers provide is you should utilize this tool
16 before anybody else comes on site, because it's clearly an
17 all-hazards approach.

18 So I think with that continuing dialogue, they
19 are aware of the resources that we can provide.

20 REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Just to follow up
23 to Mark's question, Deputy Secretary.

24 About \$7 million or so goes out in a typical year
25 through the grant program. If you were able to fund, you

1 know, every application that came in, I mean, what would
2 that dollar figure be? Do you have any idea?

3 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I don't have that dollar
4 amount with me. That's certainly something we can provide
5 and follow up with the Committee.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you very
7 much.

8 Representative Grove.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: It's like déjà vu,
10 Secretary Stem. We just got off Appropriations hearings.

11 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Good to see you.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you so much,
13 gentlemen.

14 Major Burig, the first question.

15 Active shooter training for State Police, do you
16 utilize technology? I was at a conference where they had
17 almost a 360 room. The business actually could go into a
18 courthouse or a school, film the entire courthouse, get the
19 entire layout, and provide kind of real-life active
20 shooter.

21 I went through it. I got to admit, my hands were
22 shaking afterwards. It was very surreal watching corners,
23 the whole nine yards. Do you utilize that kind of virtual
24 training within your active shooter?

25 MAJOR BURIG: We do, sir.

1 At our Academy, we have a, it's not quite
2 360 degrees, but it's live actors, film, that react to your
3 verbal commands or the firing of a weapon that has a laser
4 in it, and it can be used to simulate almost any scenario,
5 including active shooters.

6 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Excellent.

7 And do you offer that to local municipalities as
8 well, local police forces?

9 MAJOR BURIG: We do, sir. We have a whole
10 training curriculum that is put through our Bureau of
11 Training and Education, and it's offered to municipal
12 police officers and our Federal partners as well.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Excellent. Wonderful.
14 Thank you.

15 For the panel, looking back at just a rash of
16 school shootings across the country, I believe there were
17 different levels of points where it probably could have
18 been addressed earlier on. Obviously, probably prevention
19 is the best way to address this moving forward. If you
20 address it ahead of time, you don't necessarily have to
21 worry about the active shooter programs.

22 So kind of looking back at all the scenarios that
23 have happened across the various different States, we had
24 an incident in York County. Central School was closed for
25 3 days, and I know we're going to hear testimony from them

1 later. But looking back, what weaknesses do we have on the
2 prevention side, and what are your recommendations to
3 address that moving forward?

4 MAJOR BURIG: We are an intelligence-led policing
5 agency, as well as all of our partners. I think you won't
6 find a law enforcement agency that isn't engaged in that.

7 So across my desk every day, I see threats across
8 the Commonwealth, and we have within our intelligence
9 division and within PaCIC, the Pennsylvania Criminal
10 Intelligence Center, our fusion center, they are constantly
11 assessing threats either to individual schools or the
12 Commonwealth as a whole at the strategic level. They're
13 looking at every incident that occurs across the globe and
14 across the United States.

15 We have Federal partners sitting in our space
16 with us to do that collaboratively, and we send this
17 information out, not only to law enforcement in the forms
18 of briefs and alerts and secure portals, but we also share
19 it with all agencies -- private sector, non-law enforcement
20 entities, including we have a great working relationship
21 with both my partners here at the table.

22 If we have something that needs to go to all
23 schools in Pennsylvania, we have a contact with the
24 Department of Education that can disseminate it down
25 through the districts, so.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

2 MAJOR BURIG: But we're constantly assessing and
3 trying to interdict these threats before they happen.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: That's good. So that's
5 probably on the criminal side.

6 Within the school districts, is there any
7 weaknesses at the school district level to help assess, you
8 know, whether it's a mental health condition? How does
9 that collaboration between mental health professionals,
10 school districts, law enforcement, what are the weaknesses
11 within those relationships that we can do better? Is it
12 HIPAA laws because of the Federal Government that they
13 can't talk? What can we do better?

14 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

15 So one of the most important things that we can
16 always continue to improve on is building relationships
17 and internal communications. So a lot of the initial
18 breakdowns are when folks see something that causes
19 concern, whether it's a parent, a student, or a staff
20 member, and does not share that. That's usually the
21 initial point of breakdown.

22 And it's one of the reasons why the trainings,
23 for example, that we provide, we fund 29 individuals -- I'm
24 sorry -- 27 individuals and 27 out of our 29 IUs to do
25 trainings, and part of that is to "see something, say

1 something." And so they try and train individuals in
2 school settings to "see something, say something." So
3 that's usually the biggest point of breakdown.

4 Once it's reported, there actually are mechanisms
5 in place that do allow for the sharing of information, even
6 protected information. If it can put at jeopardy the
7 health and safety of students, there are provisions in the
8 law that do allow for information to be shared from school
9 district personnel to law enforcement, for example.

10 So, you know, there are always ways to improve
11 those engagements, as well as within the mental health
12 support community, and, you know, we'd be open to talking
13 more about that and would look forward to collaborating
14 with the General Assembly where there are opportunities.

15 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you.

16 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
18 McCarter.

19 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Thank you very much,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 And again, thank you all for your testimony
22 today.

23 I know Representative Longietti mentioned a few
24 of the things that I was concerned about and most
25 concerned about in terms of the funding issue dealing with

1 the grants program, and I think we have touched upon that
2 already.

3 Let me go to one other area, though, of grave
4 concern here, and that's the fact that much of what we're
5 talking about today is really touching upon the symptoms
6 and the related bleeding that comes as a result of not
7 dealing with the underlying issues of what we're talking
8 about.

9 I mean, many of our schools throughout the
10 Commonwealth do not have adequate counselors, do not have
11 adequate nurses within the buildings. That's an ongoing
12 issue that has taken place. We lack social workers, in
13 many ways, to take care of the needs of students as well.

14 And I guess my concern is that if we're only
15 going to address the results of what happens as a lack of
16 dealing with the underlying causes that help us realize
17 that there are tremendous amounts of bullying problems that
18 we know, how can we get to the point that we balance these
19 particular areas?

20 Addressing the needs, obviously, you know, the
21 security issue, is one way to try to stem that. However,
22 it will never go away unless we deal with those underlying
23 issues and the underlying issues of the weapons and
24 obviously coming into schools. I know of Representative
25 Brown and the idea of having metal detectors in every

1 school, but that creates another atmospheric issue for our
2 schools and where we send our children to be educated.

3 How best do you see, Mr. Stem, to be able to
4 balance those issues for the Department and how we should
5 move forward with legislation here?

6 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I think we would echo
7 your sentiments around balancing the issues of prevention
8 with response and recovery efforts, and part of prevention
9 is being adequately staffed and resourced to serve your
10 communities.

11 And, you know, we know the Governor has worked
12 very hard to fund schools in a way that increases resources
13 for all schools, but we would say that, you know, we need
14 to continue to make investments in public education, and I
15 think you raised counselors as a great example.

16 You know, our counselors today, we ask them to do
17 more than they have ever been asked to do before, and yet
18 we're asking them to do that without, you know, increasing
19 staffing or providing the resources to do that. Or in many
20 cases, we have seen districts that we know of and I think
21 that you have alluded to that have actually reduced
22 counseling forces in recent years.

23 So we believe it takes all efforts, including the
24 appropriate staffing and resourcing to schools, as well as
25 the response activities, to have a balanced approach.

1 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: And just as a follow-up
2 to that.

3 What guidance would you give to school districts
4 to make the choice in resources where they have to make the
5 difference between having additional security people or
6 having additional counselors to deal with the problems that
7 they face?

8 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

9 We know those are difficult decisions, and, you
10 know, school safety isn't free, and that's one of the
11 decisions that every one of our school boards and entities
12 in the State has to wrestle with. We would say that it
13 really comes down to risk assessment and knowing your
14 community and engaging your community in thoughtful
15 conversations about risk and leveraging resources in the
16 ways that you think best alleviates those.

17 It's a difficult, you know, it's certainly a
18 difficult challenge.

19 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: And it raises -- the
20 last point, Mr. Chairman.

21 And that raises the issue, therefore, also in our
22 urban environments where we have greater risks, that they
23 would pour resources into one area where other districts
24 and so forth would be able to pour their resources into
25 other things, and that's something we need to address also.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
3 Gillen.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you, gentlemen,
5 for your distinguished service, whether it be in education,
6 law enforcement, or public safety. I know the stresses,
7 the challenges.

8 Just one brief question. There is 10 parts to
9 it. No; no.

10 (Laughing.)

11 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: As a former correctional
12 officer and emergency medical technician of 35 years and an
13 Act 48 certified teacher, I would go to the Deputy
14 Secretary.

15 In terms of con ed for Act 48 certification, are
16 we looking next generation in terms of emergency
17 preparedness and public safety with some of that training?

18 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I would have to -- I know
19 I have been verbose thus far this morning. I'm going to
20 have to be short on that one and say we would get back to
21 you. I can't speak directly to the con ed as it relates to
22 Act 48 but would be, again, very happy to follow up with
23 you on that.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
2 Phillips-Hill.

3 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 Gentlemen, thank you so much for being here
6 today.

7 Having been a school board director in the
8 aftermath of Sandy Hook, I can tell you that I appreciate
9 very much all of the best practices and toolkits and
10 resources that all of your agencies put forward. We use
11 them. And in light of a recent copycat incident at the
12 school district where I served in the aftermath of the
13 Central York School District event, it was of great relief
14 that those policies and procedures and the physical
15 structural changes that were put in place in the school
16 district worked. So it was truly a great relief.

17 Deputy Secretary Stem, you have said the world
18 has changed, and the world has indeed changed, particularly
19 with regard to social media and the different applications
20 that our children are now using.

21 With regard to the recent Central York School
22 District incident that closed the school district for
23 3 days because of the threats, could you talk about how
24 each of your different agencies were involved with that
25 incident? Can you tell me what you learned, what the

1 takeaway was for each of your agencies from that incident?
2 And based on what you learned, do you have any
3 recommendations to help our school districts address these
4 types of issues or concerns going forward?

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure. So I'll be brief
6 so everyone can have an opportunity to weigh in on that.

7 We would echo the way that Central York handled
8 their closures and the threats that came into their
9 district. I know Superintendent Snell and his entire team
10 leveraged the appropriate communication strategies early
11 on, did an excellent job of keeping parents and community
12 members informed of what was happening. If I'm not
13 mistaken, also did a debriefing afterwards with the
14 community that really ensured that folks were calm.

15 And so one of -- you know, unfortunately, those
16 incidents in Central York were repeated similarly
17 throughout the Commonwealth, particularly in recent weeks
18 and we have seen in recent years. So from those, you know,
19 we learned from -- it reinforces our beliefs around the
20 importance of communication, transparency, and engaging. I
21 know they engaged first responders right away, made
22 informed decisions, and in all things, erred on the side of
23 caution.

24 So what it did underscore for us is to remind us
25 to be sure that there are mechanisms by which schools can

1 engage in the resources that the Department provides, and
2 as was mentioned before, our All-Hazards plans do talk
3 about exactly what steps to walk through.

4 And I can tell you that years ago, these used to
5 be three- or four-page documents. Now they're one-page
6 checklists so that our administrators can quickly take that
7 tool and check through and make sure that they have taken
8 the appropriate steps, and we know they did that
9 exceptionally well in Central York.

10 MAJOR BURIG: Ma'am, the Pennsylvania State
11 Police did assist with that investigation in several forms.
12 We had uniformed members at the schools while they were
13 closed, and particularly upon the reopening, computer
14 forensic examiners assisting.

15 But the local police department that handled that
16 did an exceptional job. It was truly a collaborative
17 approach, my investigators working directly with FBI
18 investigators and a local police investigator from
19 Springettsbury Township and other municipalities. The
20 communication was seamless between the agencies, and, you
21 know, it ultimately culminated in successfully identifying
22 the person that did it.

23 As was pointed out by the Committee, there were
24 hundreds of incidents, both before that and they continue
25 to this day. So what I have seen is I think others have

1 taken the lead from what was done in Central York and other
2 districts to try to address this ongoing threat. But it
3 was a very good collaborative effort between everyone
4 involved.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: So in terms of
6 PEMA's part of this: again, on the preparedness side, on
7 the front side, the development of those All-Hazards plans
8 that include vital information packets -- that is the
9 checklist as opposed to the four- and five-page plan; and
10 the idea that you have already established those
11 relationships through your training and then through your
12 tabletop exercises with your community. You know, you
13 don't want to change business cards in the middle of a
14 disaster, right? You want to have that all set ahead of
15 time. So that is part of what we provide.

16 We also have a 24/7 watch office. We're looking
17 at a common operating picture about different incidents
18 across the Commonwealth. There is reporting requirements
19 by the 911 centers from across the State for certain
20 incidents. Anything involving schools or school threats
21 are a part of that.

22 So we collect that information. We share it in
23 almost real-time with PaCIC and with the State Police and
24 with all of the other agencies, including Education. So
25 we're getting a look across the whole State of, is this a

1 statewide issue? Is this a Central York issue? That's our
2 part in this.

3 And I would have to say from everything we have
4 seen, the response and the way that it was handled was
5 exactly the way that it should have been handled.

6 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Our District
7 Attorney, Dave Sunday, is holding a town hall meeting this
8 evening at Central York High School at 6:30 p.m. to discuss
9 social media; online safety; provide input and resources to
10 parents. Are those things that are already covered by the
11 work that all of you do, and have we incorporated those
12 things into our best practices and the resources that we
13 push out to school districts?

14 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: We have a number of those
15 resources already available, but I would be remiss if I
16 didn't acknowledge that that's an area that we can continue
17 to populate resources and make them even more available to
18 parents and community members, particularly online and in
19 other ways.

20 And so I think at the Department, you know, I
21 know that our team is continuing to engage in looking at
22 additional resources that we can provide. Just last week,
23 or the other day, we had a meeting with our nine regional
24 coordinators that we fund through our IUs, that are our
25 regional points of contact, that are also helping us in

1 those planning efforts.

2 And, you know, we endeavor to continue to publish
3 and share more resources, whether we create them or whether
4 we simply link to those that are best practice, but just
5 making them available in one place that districts and
6 families can easily access.

7 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Thank you very
8 much.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
10 Tallman.

11 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 Two questions, an easy one for the Deputy and a
13 little trickier one for the Major.

14 So we have here, and I just read this last night
15 in bed, and it's the House Select Committee for School
16 Safety done in 2014, and very interesting recommendations
17 in this. So I'm going to make two that I need to pursue
18 with you later. And as a first responder myself, one of
19 the requirements of 1302 is to have blueprints/floor plans
20 available to first responders, and there are other critical
21 pieces to that, that according to the committee report,
22 that hasn't happened.

23 So my easy question to you, Matt, is, we have a
24 school, safe school advocate, and Mr. Thomas alluded to
25 Philadelphia County being pretty decent on some of this

1 stuff. And if I understand the committee report correctly,
2 it's only funded by you for, well, it's Philadelphia, a
3 county of the first class. Is that correct?

4 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: That safe schools
5 advocate -- correct -- is just for Philadelphia at this
6 time.

7 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: And so can you, i.e. PDE
8 -- I know it would take more money. That's a given. What
9 if we did that for 500 school districts? Would you
10 recommend that?

11 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: I don't think we would
12 narrow it down to any one strategy. I think we would be
13 most interested in engaging the General Assembly and taking
14 a look at all of the opportunities that we have, some that
15 may, you know, maybe in terms of increasing that type of
16 resource or other regional resources, and we'd be very open
17 to those conversations.

18 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Okay.

19 Now, Major, so in the report, we have the whole
20 thing on the Risk Vulnerability Assessment, and in Adams
21 County, we haven't done -- all of our six school districts
22 have not had that done. And I'm going to reference
23 specifically, and I may even take a slight disagreement
24 with what you have said based on this committee report.

25 Now, we have Mr. Healey here who is very familiar

1 with Bermudian. So Bermudian is a very concise campus.
2 Three buildings are right there. That's one version. And
3 then we have Upper Adams, which has buildings -- I'm not
4 saying it's bad, but they have buildings scattered all over
5 the school district. Not connected, and, I mean, they're
6 separated by miles.

7 And so the committee says that the Risk
8 Vulnerability Assessment has been done district versus
9 building. So I understand maybe it would work for
10 Bermudian where all three, both the elementary, middle
11 school, and high school are together in a campus, but then
12 when you take Upper Adams where it's spread out all over
13 northern Adams County, I think it needs to be a building by
14 building, which is the recommendation of the committee.

15 So what resources do the State Police need to
16 make that happen to all 500 school districts? Building by
17 building versus -- because the committee at least alleges
18 that the State Police is doing this district versus
19 building.

20 MAJOR BURIG: Sir, sitting before you now, to
21 come up with the resource it would take to do close to
22 6,000 school buildings in Pennsylvania, as I understand it,
23 I couldn't accurately assess what that would be.

24 With that in mind, we have done hundreds and
25 hundreds of school assessments since the inception of the

1 program in the mid-2000s, and in a lot of districts what
2 we'll do is let the superintendent pick the school. And
3 what we find is, a lot of the deficiencies you'll find in
4 all the schools within that district. Some common things:
5 inadequate lighting; lack of CCTV coverage where they can
6 see who is admitted into the building. Then we provide
7 them with a complete list of industry best practices, other
8 schools' best practices, that can be applied to their other
9 schools.

10 So even without an RVAT member looking at their
11 HVAC system in a school that's 10 miles away, a lot of the
12 recommendations and things that our people discover can be
13 applied to that school, in absence of being able to make it
14 to all 6,000 of them.

15 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: So the committee
16 assessment is that it should happen building by building.

17 MAJOR BURIG: Certainly. I mean, I believe you
18 asked me what the resource it would take to do that, and
19 honestly, I don't know, sir. I mean, it's certainly
20 something we can discuss about here.

21 I couldn't tell you what it would take.
22 Assessments typically take -- it depends on the size of the
23 school -- 1 to 2 days, and sometimes it can take more than
24 one member. So all of that would have to be taken into
25 consideration.

1 But again, often we find a lot of the same
2 deficiencies at school after school.

3 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Our final question
5 for this panel, Representative English.

6 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 Thank you, panel members and all the testifiers
8 and everyone that has provided information. It's most
9 helpful to all of us.

10 In talking with my police chiefs and
11 superintendents and school board directors, they have got a
12 lot of great plans. They have to decide on a local level
13 what to do and where to prioritize things and to balance
14 the dollars, and hopefully there is some additional
15 revenue.

16 The school resource officer, it certainly seems
17 invaluable to have that law enforcement component, because
18 we don't want teachers to be law enforcement, and yet those
19 law enforcement folks need to have those special soft
20 skills to deal with the complexity of all of our students,
21 you know, just life and world issues that maybe a lot of us
22 didn't have as teenagers or were not as prevalent.

23 But like an airplane, you know, I'm really not
24 planning or thinking about, you know, what the crash team
25 is there at the runway. I want to make sure that we've got

1 maintenance on the aircraft, good communications, weather
2 predictions and forecasts, and that's resources. That's
3 where we need to look at committing that to let the local
4 school districts make their decisions for their areas.

5 Here's my question: While we have got and we're
6 trying to deal with this for our active students, what
7 happens to Little Johnny or Little Susie when they finish
8 school, either because of expulsion or they graduate or
9 they drop out? You know, there's a file on them. What
10 happens to them when they're out of the school as it
11 relates to the Department of Education, the State Police,
12 and PEMA going forward?

13 Because it seems like those now 18-plus-year-olds
14 are, you know, troubled adults with a package of emotions
15 and unresolved issues, and it just seems like maybe we
16 abandon the file and, whoo, thank heavens that family is
17 out of my district now, but yet, that time bomb is still
18 out there. What do we have as State resources? What do we
19 have, what do we need in that regard to look beyond the
20 next phase while they're still maturing and making
21 decisions and trying to resolve maybe some past problems?

22 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: So you notice how quickly
23 we all attempted to respond to that question.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Yeah.

25 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: We would say that, so

1 safety isn't specifically a K-to-12 issue. I mean, I'm the
2 Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary. That's the
3 lens through which I see the world. But certainly this is
4 a pre-K to postsecondary, and we're all, you know, aware of
5 the incidents that have happened at institutes of higher
6 education in recent years. They have also increased.

7 But as you point out, it's also a community
8 issue, and it's one that requires, you know, multiagency
9 support at the local level and requires communication
10 structures that ensure that community members know who to
11 turn to when they have concern. It may be about a loved
12 one or a family member. It may be about a neighbor. And
13 again, I think we would say that we will continue to
14 partner with other agencies and bring our experiences at
15 the Department of Education to the table to inform those
16 conversations.

17 But they are complex and multifaceted when you
18 really start to peel back those layers, and it does require
19 collaboration between lawmakers and agencies.

20 MAJOR BURIG: If law enforcement is involved with
21 an individual in the school setting, the law allows us to
22 retain certain records related to those interactions, and,
23 of course, the Criminal History Record Information Act
24 where we can see juvenile arrests, even though employers
25 may not.

1 So when we conduct additional investigations that
2 might involve that individual, we try to look holistically.
3 We look at the entire person's background and the facts
4 that are presented to us. So those early interactions may
5 be part of a record within the bounds that we're legally
6 allowed to keep them.

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: So this is not
8 an answer from a scientist. This is an answer from a
9 former municipal police officer and corrections officer,
10 somebody involved in emergency management and first
11 response for a long time. And again, not scientific.

12 A lot of folks like that that I think you find in
13 school sometimes have just not quite found their way yet,
14 just not found whatever that activity is that gives them
15 the sense that they really need to make themselves whole.

16 We struggle with volunteers and emergency
17 services across this State and across the nation. There
18 are a lot of fantastic fire departments out there with
19 junior volunteer programs that really help take young folks
20 looking for a path, help mold them, give them a purpose,
21 give them some organization and some structure, and that
22 would be my suggestion of one of the things that may help
23 some of those individuals.

24 Again, not a scientific answer.

25 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you,
2 gentlemen, for your testimony and for your answers to all
3 the questions this morning. We appreciate you being here.
4 Thank you very much.

5 DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Thank you.

6 MAJOR BURIG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Thank you.

8
9 PANEL II:

10 VIEWS OF

11 PENNSYLVANIA EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS
12

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Our next panel
14 will be a group of five individuals representing various
15 statewide school organizations, and I'll ask them to come
16 forward at this time. Hopefully you can fit all five at
17 the table.

18 Good morning. Thank you for being here. Sorry
19 for the half hour or so delay, but I think we all kind of
20 expected that that was going to happen this morning.

21 I'll let you begin in a minute, but just by way
22 of introductions, we have Michael Faccinetto with the
23 Pennsylvania School Boards Association; Dolores McCracken
24 with the Pennsylvania State Education Association;
25 Jonathan Bauer with the Pennsylvania Principals

1 Association; Dr. Mark DiRocco with the Pennsylvania
2 Association of School Administrators; and Brent Kessler
3 with the Pennsylvania Association of School Business
4 Officials.

5 And I'll let you begin when you're ready. Who
6 would like to begin? Michael?

7 MR. FACCINETTO: Yep.

8 Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Members of the
9 Committee, for having us.

10 Good morning. My name is Michael Faccinnetto. I
11 am the 2018 President of the Pennsylvania School Boards
12 Association, also President of the Bethlehem Area School
13 District Board in Northampton County, and most importantly,
14 I am the parent of three children in public schools.

15 PSBA is a nonprofit statewide association
16 representing the 4,500 elected officials who govern the
17 Commonwealth's 500 public school districts. It is a
18 membership-driven organization pledged to the highest
19 ideals of local lay leadership for public schools.

20 On behalf of PSBA, I appreciate the opportunity
21 to speak before the Committee today regarding school safety
22 and the diverse types of safety issues school districts
23 must address. As a parent of three children in public
24 schools, I take school safety very seriously. In the past
25 few weeks, not a day has gone by that I haven't been asked

1 about the safety in our schools.

2 As school district leaders, it is our
3 responsibility to ensure that our schools remain safe and
4 that children may learn without fear of danger. However, I
5 want to emphasize that there is no one-size-fits-all
6 solution to providing safe school environments.

7 Schools have been using resources from the
8 PA Department of Education, the PA Emergency Management
9 Agency, and the PA State Police for assistance with
10 planning, school security and vulnerability assessments,
11 classroom-based active shooter preparedness training, and
12 more.

13 Many districts utilize school resource officers
14 or school police to help make their schools safer learning
15 environments. Districts can also deter incidences through
16 building access control. Schools also conduct emergency
17 drills so that students and personnel are familiar with the
18 plan and procedures that are in place.

19 PSBA assists school districts in complying with
20 laws and regulations associated with emergency preparedness
21 and effective relations with local law enforcement
22 officials. The Association and its members' policies and
23 administrative regulations that address necessary proactive
24 and reactive issues and procedures related to various
25 school climate and safety areas include:

- Bullying prevention and education;
- Comprehensive student services such as guidance, psychological services, social development, diagnostics, and intervention services;
- Emergency preparedness planning and drills;
- Threat assessments;
- Provision of the school entity's emergency preparedness plan to each local police and fire department; and
- The Memorandum of Understanding with each local police department, which is required to be reviewed and updated on a biennial basis.

Because school districts are vastly different throughout Pennsylvania in their security needs, the best approaches to school safety must often be determined at the local school district level. Implementing proactive security steps is critical for school districts to do, not merely from a risk management perspective but because of genuine care about maintaining schools as the safest environment for children to learn and grow.

Amid the understandable sorrow in the aftermath of the recent school violence events, educational leaders, parents, and lawmakers must work together on solutions,

1 some of which will require action from the General
2 Assembly. PSBA wants to emphasize that it has not taken a
3 position on gun control and that its solutions focus
4 strictly on school-based safety.

5 With that in mind, we suggest the following for
6 your legislative consideration:

7 Continue and increase funding for the Safe
8 Schools and Safe Schools Initiative Targeted Grants.

9 These grants are critical for schools to fund the
10 use of school resource officers and school police officers.
11 Schools also use these grants for other purposes as they
12 choose to fund programs and security-related equipment that
13 address school safety and violence.

14 I would ask that when considering policies that
15 address security equipment, specifically metal detectors, I
16 urge the Committee to fund that option through this grant
17 but not mandate this equipment.

18 Bethlehem is a large school district with two
19 very large high schools, Liberty and Freedom. Liberty High
20 School has approximately 3,000 students, all of which who
21 enter the building each day within 15 minutes. A school
22 like this would require multiple metal detectors and an
23 equal number of X-ray machines for bags, not to mention
24 trained and certified staff to operate each piece of
25 equipment.

1 Schools are not Federal buildings and they are
2 not State Capitols that have 24/7 security in place.
3 Schools are the hub of the community that open their doors
4 to a wide variety of groups. If a school were to install
5 this type of equipment, it would have to be used all the
6 time. The sheer amount of afterschool and weekend
7 activities would make this not only extremely expensive but
8 nearly impossible.

9 Every musical performance, every Boy and Girl
10 Scout troop meeting, every community block-watch meeting,
11 senior citizens groups, Sunday morning church groups that
12 utilize our auditoriums, sporting events, et cetera, would
13 be subject to a metal detector and bag check. Deliveries
14 would need to be scanned to ensure a completely secure
15 building. In my opinion, there is nothing worse than a
16 false sense of security, and without the implementation I
17 just described, that is exactly what we would be providing.

18 With that being said, there are many districts
19 who may choose to install this type of security.
20 Increasing the funding to this grant will allow school
21 districts and the communities to decide what is best for
22 their individual schools.

23 We need to provide resources to ensure that
24 school districts can enhance, upgrade, or install the
25 appropriate safety and security measures in their

1 buildings.

2 Many districts are in need of physical updates
3 and repairs to secure their schools but are simply unable
4 to afford these types of school construction projects. The
5 cost of security projects is complicated by the fact that
6 the PlanCon moratorium has been implemented.

7 The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act requires school
8 boards to hold advertised meetings open to the public and
9 provide opportunity for public comment. There are limited
10 exceptions to school board discussions that can be held in
11 executive session.

12 While we believe that broad community involvement
13 is important, making school security and safety plans
14 available to the general public puts schools at risk to
15 savvy intruders seeking opportunities to cause harm to our
16 children. We ask that the General Assembly clarify the
17 Sunshine Law so that school boards can have discussions of
18 school safety and security measures in executive session.

19 As we heard earlier, mental health screening can
20 play an important role in helping to identify students so
21 they can receive the services they need.

22 Districts need legislation that complies with
23 current timelines of health screenings, is not burdensome
24 to school administration, but is effective in encouraging
25 screening of students. Screenings could assist school

1 faculty and staff in working proactively with our
2 students.

3 Responding to student concerns and identifying
4 individuals who exhibit behaviors that may indicate an
5 affinity toward violence are also important. Districts
6 need increased access to in-school support services,
7 including mental health professionals, guidance counselors,
8 and education for students on mental health, identification
9 of threats, and to whom they should report these threats.

10 Although these services are provided in schools
11 to some extent, difficult economic times make it
12 challenging for schools to maintain the breadth of staff
13 and services available. PSBA asks that more technical and
14 financial resources be made available to schools to
15 maintain and expand student support staff teams and
16 confidential communication channels.

17 We ask that you direct the Pennsylvania
18 Department of Education, the Pennsylvania State Police, and
19 PEMA and other involved agencies to review and enhance
20 technical assistance and resources they currently offer to
21 schools.

22 Districts need access to the most advanced school
23 security plans and emergency response models, as well as
24 training on the implementation of such plans. We ask the
25 General Assembly to direct PDE, PEMA, and other State

1 entities to provide security plans, models, conflict
2 diffusion training, and other technical assistance to
3 elevate and update their plans to school districts so they
4 may continue to benefit from these resources.

5 Regarding the issue of new enforcement officers
6 and school resource officers being available in schools,
7 local school boards should retain the authority to review
8 and decide what safety protocols are necessary. We ask
9 that this issue not be mandated by the State Legislature
10 and remain a local control issue.

11 The arming of school staff. This issue gives
12 grave concerns for many reasons. Different school
13 districts have different security concerns, and even within
14 a school district, individual schools have different
15 security concerns. PSBA's position is that we should not
16 mandate this decision at the State level.

17 I thank you for the opportunity to speak to
18 you today about the pressing issue of school safety. As
19 the President of PSBA, a board member, a community member,
20 and most importantly, a parent, I appreciate the time and
21 energy that this Committee and the General Assembly is
22 dedicating to the process of strengthening school
23 security.

24 I want to emphasize again that there is no
25 one-size-fits-all approach that will work for all school

1 districts and that we need flexible options and the
2 resources to implement them. We look forward to working
3 with you throughout this process.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. McCRACKEN: Good morning, Chairman
6 Hickernell, Chairman Roebuck, and Members of the Committee.
7 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this
8 critically important issue with you today.

9 As a mother, grandmother, and lifelong educator,
10 my heart aches for the senseless loss of lives and
11 destruction in the wake of yet another mass school
12 shooting. As the President of PSEA, I am anxious and
13 worried for the safety of our students and my fellow school
14 employees. They're anxious and worried, too.

15 Scott Beigel was a geography teacher at
16 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.
17 He was shot and killed as he attempted to barricade his
18 classroom door after ushering students inside to safety. I
19 think other educators would do the same, and I think many
20 have.

21 But just think what it means that millions of
22 educators wake up every morning wondering what would they
23 do if they were put in the position Scott Beigel was placed
24 in and worrying about their students, their families, and
25 themselves as they kiss their own families goodbye.

1 It's a horrific new reality. I'm tired of just
2 worrying. I'm tired of just being anxious. I'm ready for
3 clear and decisive action.

4 This time must be different.

5 This time, we must change the cycle of the past,
6 and you can be the ones to do it.

7 PSEA is a member-driven organization. We respect
8 the expertise and experience of those in our public schools
9 because they are on the front lines, are the first
10 responders, and are those closest to students who may
11 become adrift.

12 And so I asked what they thought we should do.
13 In just one week, I received nearly 1,000 thoughtful and
14 articulate replies. I have a summary of them here today in
15 a report that we are sharing with you, the Governor, and
16 others who want to read it.

17 I would like to share with you the five
18 suggestions that we received, and these suggestions have
19 the broadest support:

20 Increase appropriations for school safety grants
21 that can be used to provide funding for physical
22 improvements like secure entrances, panic buttons, door
23 jammers, even streaming video shared directly with the
24 local law enforcement station, active shooter training
25 programs, and school resource officers.

1 Addressing the physical safety of school
2 buildings was one of the most common responses we received.
3 I would ask that you please work with your fellow lawmakers
4 and Governor Wolf to secure additional funding for
5 Pennsylvania Safe Schools Grants in the final fiscal year
6 '18-19 budget and ensure more regular school safety audits.

7 Second, focus on student wellness and invest in
8 more school counselors, school psychologists, social
9 workers, school nurses, behavioral specialists, home and
10 school visitors, and paraprofessionals.

11 Much of the debate around school safety has
12 centered on mental health. However, we believe mental
13 health is just one component of student wellness.

14 There are students in every school in
15 Pennsylvania who struggle with physical and emotional
16 health. Those students need support and encouragement, not
17 blame and shame.

18 Research shows overwhelmingly the impact of
19 ensuring every single student feels supported by at least
20 one adult at school. These meaningful connections help
21 students navigate challenges and help ensure their basic
22 needs are met.

23 However, if we are to genuinely engage in a
24 constructive dialogue around the necessary actions to be
25 taken to prevent the next Parkland, then we must recognize

1 and acknowledge the truth of what is happening in our
2 schools today.

3 The ability of our teachers and all adults
4 working in our schools to connect with students and
5 intervene at the earliest sign of despair, before a crisis,
6 has been severely hampered by a lack of resources and
7 intensified focus on standardized testing at the expense of
8 social and emotional supports and learning.

9 PSEA strongly urges that we not lose sight of the
10 necessity of longer term investments to ensure there is an
11 infrastructure of human capacity to support our students on
12 a daily basis.

13 Third, establish threat assessment and crisis
14 teams made up of law enforcement, school-employed mental
15 health professionals, teachers, support staff, and
16 administrators.

17 If there is true hope for addressing the
18 underlying causes of student violence, rather than merely
19 reacting to that violence, that hope very likely lies in
20 establishing threat assessment and crisis teams.

21 PSEA is working with the superintendent,
22 principal, and school board associations. Last week, our
23 organizations offered webinars for our members on threat
24 assessments because we believe they are critical to keeping
25 students safe. We will continue to work with these groups

1 on this issue, and I hope you will help us bring these
2 teams to every district in the Commonwealth.

3 Access to a team that is dedicated to creating
4 individualized assessments of each threat and to
5 recommending a course of action that involves considering a
6 complete wellness would be an enormously important resource
7 for Pennsylvania schools, and I would strongly encourage
8 the Legislature to adopt a set of guidelines like the
9 well-known Virginia Assessment Program.

10 Fourth, work with Congress to protect the
11 Title I, II, and IV funding designed to provide healthy and
12 secure learning environments.

13 The President's recently released 2019 budget
14 proposal makes significant cuts to education programs. It
15 would be a critical mistake to defund these programs given
16 the recent events which highlight the need to provide
17 support for school safety efforts.

18 Fifth, provide space and opportunity for school
19 districts to work together to find customized solutions.

20 Pennsylvania is a diverse State. Tioga and
21 Philadelphia Counties are very different places, and a
22 one-size-fits-all solution is simply impractical in the
23 school safety context. As you consider ideas to make our
24 schools safe, it is my hope you will allow flexibility and
25 local autonomy in order to enable locally elected

1 officials, parents, and schools to determine how to best
2 use the resources available to them.

3 As you know, PSEA has a broad and diverse
4 membership with a variety of perspectives and solutions.
5 We view this diversity of opinions as healthy and recognize
6 that regardless of where a public school employee falls on
7 this debate, we all come from the same place: the desire
8 to keep schools and students safe.

9 As may be expected, a number of PSEA members also
10 shared thoughts spanning the gamut from expanded gun
11 control to arming educators. I feel it is only fair to
12 pass along those sentiments, although they are not included
13 in our five recommendations. I respect the opinions of
14 those who support Senate Bill 383, just as I respect the
15 opinions of those who support stricter gun control
16 measures.

17 But we at PSEA are a "small d" democratic
18 organization and have a process to consider legislation.
19 In this case, our legislative committee, board of
20 directors, and our statewide team of officers, all elected
21 by our colleagues, had a chance to consider Senate Bill 383
22 and unanimously voted to oppose the legislation. We did so
23 after considering the input from first responders; from
24 those involved in prior school shootings, including letters
25 from the survivors of Sandy Hook; and from our 181,000

1 members, the majority of whom do not support the arming of
2 teachers.

3 There are proven safety measures that do not
4 involve the risks and dangers of adding thousands of guns
5 to our schools. I have provided five such ideas that can
6 make a difference and save lives, and I would ask you to
7 focus on those actions.

8 In closing, I will never forget the day,
9 April 20, 1999, when I heard the news of two students
10 carrying out a mass shooting at Columbine. I was helping
11 students at my school in the Council Rock School District.
12 The level of panic, fear: It was terrifying and
13 overwhelming.

14 And I will never forget the horrific sadness I
15 felt in December 2012 when 20 first and second graders,
16 just babies, were shot at Sandy Hook.

17 And now Parkland has happened, and I feel a
18 renewed sense of shock, a renewed feeling of sadness, but I
19 also feel an overwhelming desire for action.

20 Representatives, these tragedies aren't going to
21 stop on their own unless we act. No student, educator, or
22 parent should walk through the threshold of a school and
23 have to worry about the threat of violence.

24 I know it is challenging to find consensus and to
25 find the resources needed to implement these ideas. Still,

1 I believe the proposals I have shared with you today --
2 investing in school safety grants, providing more support
3 for mental and emotional health, creating crisis teams
4 designed to predict and prevent violence, protecting
5 Federal funding, and allowing localized planning -- can and
6 will achieve bipartisan support.

7 And yes, they will require investments, but think
8 about the people of Florida, Connecticut, or Colorado
9 having to look back with regret. Think of the actions they
10 would take today to have avoided those tragedies.

11 Let us not look back and regret.

12 Let us not wait for it to be our turn before we
13 act when we could act now.

14 Please do anything and everything possible, and
15 please do it today.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. KESSLER: Good morning.

18 First, I just want to say thank you for the
19 opportunity to speak in front of all of you. My name is
20 Brent Kessler. I am the Business Manager and the Board
21 Secretary from the Central York School District, York
22 County.

23 I am a proud father of three, an 8-year-old, a
24 6-year-old, and a 3-year-old. We live in Central York
25 School District. Two are in one of our elementary schools.

1 My wife is a special education teacher at Columbia
2 Borough School District in Lancaster County. So very
3 near and dear, obviously, not just being the numbers guy
4 and the CFO. So this is a very sensitive topic to me as
5 well.

6 And again -- I think the Major left -- local
7 law enforcement, State law enforcement, and Federal law
8 enforcement played an unbelievable role several weeks ago,
9 and I just want to thank all of them and all the first
10 responders as well.

11 And before I continue with my couple of comments,
12 a huge thank you to the leadership of Dr. Michael Snell,
13 our superintendent, as well as our communications director,
14 Julie Randall Romig. They did a phenomenal job through our
15 district's events over the last several weeks and the last
16 month or two. So without them, you know, we wouldn't have
17 been able to be as successful as we were with our community
18 and families.

19 So hopefully each of you received my written
20 testimony submitted earlier in the week, several pages
21 long. A lot of good details in there. I'm going to
22 summarize some of the points as far as the costs and the
23 hardware, staff, personnel, a lot of the research that we
24 have done. And so I won't read the whole thing, and I have
25 a couple of bullet points to touch on.

1 And just to take a few minutes to walk through
2 what Central York has done. Obviously, we heard earlier
3 today, as many of you are aware, credible threats closed
4 our school for three school days. It actually started on a
5 Tuesday afternoon and was not resolved until a Sunday
6 night, late at night. So it was almost a week long. We
7 did miss 3 days of school.

8 I'm not here to talk about that specific event
9 but what has taken place since. The first questions that
10 came in, and it has been mentioned today about metal
11 detectors, and so we jumped right in. Our buildings and
12 grounds director and myself started to do all of the
13 homework to look at the different types, size, kinds, cost,
14 and that's just for the physical piece of it.

15 But the personnel, as has been touched on by many
16 of my peers here today, obviously the personnel needed to
17 properly manage that. We have a high school of about
18 1,800, and so trying to bring those in in a matter of 20,
19 30 minutes, how would you do that safely, efficiently,
20 being able to scan all of that.

21 So we are fortunate to be a neighbor to York City
22 School District, the School District of the City of York.
23 They have metal detectors at their high school. They have
24 had them for several years. They have been a good partner
25 with us. We went and visited them about 2 weeks ago, spent

1 a little time at their high school, seeing their intake.
2 They have three different entrances. They have two units
3 at each entrance. And just wanted to study that to see,
4 again, at a local decision, how would it work for Central
5 York if that's an avenue our school board chooses to go
6 down.

7 And so some of the costs. Obviously, between
8 \$20,000 and \$30,000 for just the hardware if we needed to
9 outfit two or three entrances. Not too bad. But the
10 long-term annual costs for the personnel, the security or
11 the school resource officers, adds up to anywhere from
12 \$150,000 to \$200,000 a year just for one building. That
13 would just be a high school alone.

14 And so, okay, that's one option. But if we don't
15 go with metal detectors, if we don't go down that route,
16 another suggestion, conversations we're having, are what
17 about backpacks: limiting backpacks; eliminating them
18 altogether; limiting them to a carry-on size of an airport,
19 small; even down to the conversation of clear, clear
20 backpacks, visible backpacks. Administration, principals,
21 could eyeball every student coming in just to see what's
22 being brought in and out of our buildings during the school
23 day. So that was a consideration.

24 Obviously, the next big thing was the police,
25 whether you hire your own internal school district police,

1 whether you contract out with SROs, or down to just your
2 regular event and security staff. And so the gentleman
3 earlier had talked about the three different levels of
4 school security that are employed right now.

5 We do have an SRO in our high school with
6 Springettsbury Township, full time during the school year.
7 We have a Schaad Detective Agency full-time officer as well
8 that is in our high school. And then we have our own event
9 and security staff that help with graduations,
10 performances, and other shows. So we do have all three of
11 those currently in place. But the question was, if we
12 wanted that for all seven of our buildings, the middle
13 school and five elementaries, what would that look like.

14 And so again, York City, very fortunate to have
15 spent some time with them. They came out to us a couple
16 weeks ago with three of their officers. They have their
17 own local force, police force, in their school district.
18 We spent some time looking at full time, part time, hours,
19 duties that they have, what supplies that are needed,
20 equipment, vehicles, other types of things to outfit your
21 own internal versus coordinating with Northern Regional on
22 one side of our district and Springettsbury Township on the
23 other side, both local law enforcement, to have additional
24 SROs in each building. And again, those costs could range
25 anywhere from \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year, total costs for

1 that personnel, to make a full-time officer or more in each
2 building.

3 We had also reached out to Lebanon and
4 Chambersburg School Districts as well that have their own
5 police force, so again, a thank you to them.

6 Another opportunity we took through when the
7 event was happening as well as immediately after were
8 security cameras. So we're fortunate that every building
9 has security cameras, as many do across the State, but many
10 do not. But it gave us a chance to look at, were some of
11 them outdated. Was the technology old, because they were
12 put up 10 years ago during construction, or 20 years ago
13 with the original construction, and they don't have the
14 zoom capabilities, the digital capabilities that maybe we
15 need nowadays.

16 As well as badge access. So every one of our
17 buildings have badge access that have a chip in for all
18 staff to get in and out of. However, there were some
19 common areas, there were some gymnasiums, auditoriums, that
20 maybe did not have that. And so we found a couple of
21 places to grow and opportunities to add those in the short
22 term as well to make sure that every place can be locked
23 down and everybody would be safe in an emergency.

24 A couple other questions. Obviously, it led to,
25 mental health was touched on here. We currently contract

1 with T.W. Ponessa in York County, K through 12, to provide
2 mental health counseling to our families and students in
3 need. They come into our building, and I won't go into the
4 details because I'm not the educational person. The
5 superintendents and principals can handle that. But we
6 have an agreement with them.

7 We have several school counselors. We have two
8 social workers in our district. We employ two diversity
9 specialists in our district as well. So we're fortunate to
10 have all those currently in place, but obviously we're
11 looking at what would it mean for additional counselors or
12 additional outside agencies maybe that could partner with
13 us. We have a business roundtable from community groups
14 that we're working with to possibly provide additional help
15 to be preventative.

16 And then we took the opportunity to look at all
17 of our entrance points to all of our buildings: bus
18 drop-off and pickup for the student side, the school bus
19 side, but then the parent drop-off and pickup, and so where
20 parents are pulling up, the traffic patterns, the flows.
21 Was it adequate, was it efficient, or that's just the way
22 it has always been. So it gave us a great opportunity to
23 look at that. What staff, what support staff, what
24 administration is out every day welcoming the students and
25 parents as they're dropping their loved ones off.

1 We got down to, we have a fitness center and a
2 swimming pool at our high school that from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m.
3 is open to the community. Okay; other than a lifeguard
4 maybe standing there, those doors were open, and that gave
5 us an opportunity to look at that and see, do we need
6 additional security at those times; do we have to have
7 sign-in procedures. And so we were able to grow in a
8 couple of areas. Again, back to that risk assessment: how
9 can we make sure that we are safe in what we're doing.

10 And again, finally, I had mentioned our PR
11 director. But I think any school district that has the
12 opportunity for a communications or PR director, whether
13 it's part time or full time, if there is additional Safe
14 Schools money or grant money that could go to help fund
15 those. They are experts in their field.

16 She is phenomenal. Julie did an amazing job with
17 the communication, the planning, the responding, the
18 community. We held the town hall meeting right afterwards
19 with a panel of experts. We have the event tonight that
20 has been mentioned at Central York as well. So
21 communications was key to building that community support
22 and keeping them informed.

23 To finish up, from a PASBO perspective, from the
24 business operations' and the school operations' standpoint,
25 we did previously this year, under one of our legislative

1 priorities, adopt a school safety initiative. I'm just
2 going to read it real quick:

3 PASBO will advocate to make school safety a
4 priority in Pennsylvania, focusing on significantly
5 increasing State funding to LEAs for safety and security as
6 well as for supports for students; recognizing that LEAs
7 are in the best position to understand the safety,
8 security, and needs of their schools, students, staff,
9 parents, and communities; and that efforts targeted at
10 improving school safety should not be mandatory, must not
11 be mandatory. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work,
12 but efforts to allow LEAs to implement programs that are
13 uniquely tailored to them and scaled for each individual
14 need is obviously our priority as an association.

15 So with that, at the end, I'd be happy to answer
16 any questions that I can. So thank you.

17 MR. BAUER: Thank you, Chairman Hickernell and
18 Chairman Roebuck and House Education Committee Members, for
19 giving me the opportunity today to provide testimony on
20 school safety on behalf of principals across the State.

21 My name is Jonathan Bauer, and I have been the
22 Principal of Upper Merion Area High School for the last
23 13 years, and I have worked in public education in
24 Pennsylvania for the last 23 years. I also serve on the
25 Board of Directors for the Pennsylvania Principals

1 Association and the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic
2 Association.

3 Like all principals today, I am deeply concerned
4 about the safety of students and staff in our schools. We
5 have no greater responsibility than to provide a safe
6 learning environment. All learning is dependent, first and
7 foremost, on making sure that the learner's basic needs are
8 met, including the need for a safe place to learn.

9 The world of school safety has changed greatly
10 since the Columbine High School shootings in 1999. As the
11 leaders of our schools, principals have spent countless
12 hours researching the latest safety protocols, implementing
13 best practices, and doing our best to ensure student
14 safety.

15 In my career, these efforts have included:

- 16
17 • Countless interactions with local police to
18 discuss and analyze possible threats against
19 the school.
- 20 • Participation in "safe school" committees
21 that include district personnel and community
22 first responders.
- 23 • In-service trainings run by countywide safety
24 personnel on armed intruder responses such as
25 "Run-Hide-Fight."

- 1 • Tabletop exercises for administrative teams,
2 designed to practice decisionmaking and
3 armed-intruder scenarios.
- 4 • The installation of two “panic” buttons in my
5 school as part of a countywide program for all
6 schools, which can immediately connect with
7 911 emergency dispatch and police in the case
8 of an emergency.
- 9 • Security audits done by outside security
10 experts to provide guidance on how district
11 and school safety can be made stronger.
- 12 • Collaboration with other local school
13 administrators about their security protocols
14 and conversation about what we can learn from
15 each other’s experiences.

16
17 To help you understand my personal thoughts on
18 school safety, I would like to share with the Committee an
19 experience of my own in June 2007.

20 The police called our school district security
21 director about threats that were being brought to their
22 attention made from a 19-year-old recent alumnus of our
23 high school. These threats were made online and forwarded
24 to the police by a concerned current student.

25 The next morning, we held a brief faculty meeting

1 to let staff know that we were working closely with police
2 in regard to a threat, and we shared a picture of the
3 former student. As school began, a teacher identified that
4 the former student was indeed in our building, and we went
5 into immediate lockdown.

6 A teacher who knew the student asked him to come
7 into his classroom. I then went to that classroom and
8 relieved the teacher while we waited for police.

9 Local police arrived on site very quickly, and
10 the SWAT team made their way through our building and to
11 the classroom where they apprehended the student without
12 incident. Luckily, this former student did not have a
13 weapon on his person.

14 A search of his home did reveal that he had a
15 rifle and bomb-making materials in his possession. As a
16 result, he spent time in a mental health facility and was
17 convicted of making terroristic threats.

18 I learned a great deal from this firsthand
19 encounter with a possible threat. First, it was extremely
20 important that our school district security and
21 administrative staff already had strong connections with
22 local police and were in a position to coordinate our
23 efforts quickly.

24 Our safety protocols for lockdown were key in
25 making sure our students and staff knew what to do in a

1 lockdown scenario. Drills are important.

2 Our relationships with students are important as
3 well, so that students are comfortable seeking out adults
4 in their school and community when they feel there is a
5 possible threat.

6 Lastly, it taught me that we must be vigilant as
7 school leaders to always make sure that we are ready to
8 handle unexpected events and make important and quick
9 decisions.

10 As you consider how the Pennsylvania Legislature
11 can support school safety, I would ask you to consider the
12 following:

13 Principals and schools seek support in
14 identifying the best practices in school safety and the
15 resources to implement them. As new ideas for school
16 safety are considered, they should be carefully researched
17 and vetted before being enacted. The results are too
18 important to be rushed out of a fear to act.

19 One such idea that I know the Legislature has
20 considered is allowing teachers to be armed. I can say
21 without hesitation that the intruder incident I described
22 earlier would have only been made less safe, not more, if
23 there were multiple teachers in our building with firearms.

24 Guns as a safety measure in schools are best
25 handled by trained security personnel or law enforcement.

1 Teachers and administrators have been trained to teach and
2 lead, not to engage in gun battle. Even with training, we
3 cannot expect that educators would be available and able to
4 react in a crisis situation at the same level as a highly
5 trained officer.

6 The mental health of our students is also an
7 important component to a safe school. In my experience,
8 the mental health needs among teenagers has grown, not only
9 in the number of students who need help but also the
10 magnitude of the issues that they face.

11 Mental health services in our schools have
12 increased as well, but there is more work that can be done
13 in that area. Mental health programming in our schools and
14 communities is an important proactive measure to lessen the
15 potential for individuals to threaten the safety of
16 students.

17 No one approach or one entity will resolve this
18 issue. We need a multifaceted approach with involvement
19 from the school community, law enforcement, mental health
20 professionals, and Legislators. The Pennsylvania
21 Principals Association advocates for a comprehensive
22 approach, which includes mitigation and prevention,
23 preparedness, response, and recovery.

24 Finally, bringing a greater level of discussion
25 and collaboration to the many issues that surround school

1 safety and the lessons learned from the tragic events of
2 past school shootings can only aid in making our schools
3 safer. School administrators, community leaders, and
4 Legislators should be committed to maintaining an open
5 dialogue, not only when tragic events occur but on an
6 ongoing basis as well so that we are always at the ready.

7 I believe principals have an important voice in
8 those conversations, and I thank you for allowing me to be
9 here today.

10 DR. DiROCCO: Good morning, everyone.

11 My name is Mark DiRocco. I'm the Executive
12 Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School
13 Administrators. Chairman Hickernell, Chairman Roebuck, and
14 Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to be
15 here.

16 In deference to time and all of the other
17 testimony that was already read, I'm just going to
18 highlight some of the things from our testimony. It's
19 already in your packets. Many of our points have already
20 been discussed, but I want to highlight some of those.

21 First, I want to thank the House for the 26 bills
22 that were sent to us recently in regard to school safety.
23 We commend you for that much effort going into thoughts and
24 ideas about how to make our schools safe.

25 But we also want to make a comment on that today,

1 that perhaps that's one of the issues that we have to
2 tackle here in that we can't have 26 disjointed bills when
3 it comes to school safety. We need to collaborate and work
4 together with both chambers and the Governor's Office to
5 make sure that everybody is on the same page and that we
6 have a coordinated, sustained effort on school safety as we
7 move forward so we can put together coordinated
8 legislation, omnibus bills, just to make sure that all of
9 our schools are safe.

10 It was mentioned a little bit earlier about the
11 safety audits that the State Police do. PASA strongly
12 believes that every school building, not just one school in
13 a school district, needs to have those safety audits.

14 We understand that's going to take some more
15 personnel and some more money and some more funding. And
16 that is a common theme throughout our testimony today, that
17 we do not believe that we are going to be able to
18 reallocate local school district funds in order to increase
19 safety in our schools, that we're going to have to have new
20 funding sources and new funding resources in order to make
21 sure all of our staff and our students are safe every day
22 in school.

23 So that's an issue that I know is difficult to
24 approach and to take care of, but it's something we're
25 going to have to do on behalf of our kids.

1 Once those safety audits are done, that's when
2 every district really needs to sit down and make sure
3 they have an updated safety plan in place. You heard
4 Deputy Secretary Stem talk about the All-Hazards planning.
5 PDE does have the Office of Safe Schools, and they can come
6 into your school district and work jointly with the school
7 district leaders, with first responders, with local law
8 enforcement, the fire department, and everyone else to put
9 together adequate and very thorough plans so when crises do
10 occur, people know what to do and how to operationalize
11 those plans.

12 But, you know, once those plans are in place, you
13 need good training as well, so you need time and resources
14 to make sure everyone knows what to do and how to
15 operationalize those plans when something does occur. So
16 we're going to need more resources in that area.

17 The physical structures. I know the whole
18 PlanCon issue is still up for debate and we're still
19 waiting on the final report to come out about PlanCon, but
20 school districts are going to need more money to make sure
21 that their entry points are safe; that their buildings are
22 up to new safety codes, new safety procedures; that there
23 is only one point of entry; that there is a safe, secure
24 vestibule when people come in and out of the building
25 during the day, and that can cost considerable dollars.

1 Many districts have already spent thousands if
2 not millions of dollars, you know, taking care of their
3 infrastructure, reorganizing their infrastructure, doing
4 renovations, and so forth.

5 We agree with everyone else at the table here.
6 We do not believe that arming staff members will add
7 security to the school. We think that potentially creates
8 more problems than it solves for already the issues that
9 were already articulated earlier. We do believe, though,
10 that trained SRO officers, trained police officers, and
11 school police officers can add security to schools.

12 And I have to tell you, folks, from experience,
13 that does not have to cost a lot of money. When I left my
14 last district, we were in the process of putting together
15 our own school police force. We had hired just two
16 individuals. One was a retired State Police officer, one
17 was a retired municipal chief of police. We were paying
18 them \$27, \$28 an hour, because they didn't need benefits
19 and so forth. It was very cost effective, and we had
20 trained people in the buildings who knew what to look for,
21 knew how to keep us safe, how to keep the staff and the
22 kids safe. So there are lots of ways to accomplish school
23 safety that can also be cost effective.

24 The issue was brought up about more counselors
25 and social workers. That is a crying need. You can go to

1 any school superintendent, any school building principal,
2 walk in and talk to any teacher, and they are all going to
3 tell you that kids are coming to school today with more
4 issues and problems and concerns than ever before.

5 And I believe right now the recommendation is
6 we should have one school guidance counselor for every
7 250 students. Depending on what report you look at, it's
8 probably 1 to 380 or 1 to over 400 students right now in
9 Pennsylvania.

10 We need more of those people in our buildings,
11 because something else that was mentioned earlier today was
12 kids need to have relationships with adults, with a caring
13 adult, and the more people you can put into schools whose
14 sole responsibility it is to work with kids who are having
15 those issues, the better off everyone is going to be.

16 You know, most school shootings are not random
17 acts. If you look at the reports by the FBI, the Secret
18 Service, and the U.S. Department of Education, almost all
19 of them are planned. Almost every one of these young
20 people who end up coming in to shoot in school, they were
21 either bullied at school, they were mistreated at home, or
22 just mistreated all the way around. And almost every one
23 of them believe that no one was there to help them, and
24 that's why it's so important to have caring adults in
25 schools who can develop relationships with kids.

1 But once a person, a young person or whoever is
2 going to be the attacker, develops that violence plan, the
3 clock is ticking, because then the next big key is, do they
4 have access to firearms? If they have access to firearms,
5 then you can almost rest assured that they're going to try
6 to carry out their violent plan.

7 And that's when you need all of your staff
8 members. I believe someone here on my right said you have
9 to be vigilant in looking for signs, looking for messages.
10 Almost every school shooter gave some kind of message to
11 someone that they were going to perpetrate the act.
12 Sometimes those signs are very easy to miss, so everyone
13 needs to be trained on what those signs are and make sure
14 they are reporting something when they hear something or
15 see something.

16 We would also be concerned about the amount of
17 reporting that has to be done back to either PDE or to the
18 Legislature. Let's just remember that as we look at
19 putting in policies and new laws and new statutes for
20 school safety, that we don't make this a paperwork effort
21 instead of an effort that's going to actually make sure
22 that students and staff are safe.

23 And I would just want to read my last paragraph
24 in closing:

25 "No matter what bills are finally approved by the

1 legislature and signed into law by the governor to improve
2 safety, school districts must have the flexibility,
3 resources and funding necessary for the sole purpose of
4 school security. We do not accept the notion that existing
5 school district or state funds can simply be reallocated to
6 the level necessary to appropriately fund the needed safety
7 improvements for our children and educational staff
8 members. Only with additional funds will our schools
9 continue to have the resources they need to fulfill their
10 mission of providing strong academic programs and services
11 to prepare students for their future. Pennsylvania"
12 recently "ranked 8th of the fifty States in the 2018
13 Education Week Quality Counts Report, which provides a
14 state-by-state assessment of public education. Now is not
15 the time to put our upward trajectory at risk. We can and
16 must address both the mission of public schools and the
17 safety of those who study and work in them with the
18 resources adequate to meet both goals."

19 Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you very
21 much for your testimony and for your service to our schools
22 and to our children.

23 Before I open it up to questions, I would like to
24 recognize Representative Mindy Fee, who has joined us.

25 Thank you, Mindy.

1 Representative Miller.

2 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
3 and thank you to everyone who testified today.

4 About 2 weeks ago, the American Academy of
5 Pediatrics along with the Canadian Paediatric Society and
6 psychiatric associations from both countries came out with
7 a recommendation regarding depression screens. Clearly,
8 several of you brought that up as well.

9 I have a bill with Representative Judy Ward that
10 we have worked on with a couple of your organizations in
11 particular, and I know that you all perhaps have to go
12 through all your processes to be able to, you know, endorse
13 particular bills. But let me just ask the group of you
14 there, is there anyone who disagrees that depression
15 screens should be done with our students? Is there anyone?

16 DR. DiROCCO: Well, I can tell you that our
17 organization did respond, I think, to your staff on that
18 bill, and we are supportive of that idea that a depression
19 screening would be part of their normal 6th grade physical
20 and their 11th grade physical.

21 I think the ideals or the difficulties in that
22 are going to have to be worked out as to who is paying for
23 it, is it going to be part of the parents', you know,
24 health insurance plan, or how that's all going to work out.
25 But certainly any time we can get kids help earlier in the

1 process and identifying the needs that they have along
2 those lines, we think that would be a positive.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: I appreciate it.

4 Conceptually, everybody is in agreement that
5 depression screens seem like a good recommendation. Good
6 to go on? All right.

7 And, sir, I thank you for your comment. I did
8 want to follow up on some of your testimony really quick.

9 I was exploring the, you mentioned school
10 counselors, and I think you said it was, I forget your
11 word, but a severe need for us to address. You know, and I
12 apologize, because even though I was a teacher back in the
13 days, I'm unfamiliar with the -- I have it in my mind what
14 a school counselor was, and I'm thinking in my head, I'm
15 like, guidance counselor helping somebody to get into
16 school versus training that would help in mental health, in
17 disabilities, trauma, or anything else.

18 Just so I understand, when you are saying
19 "counselor," can you just give a little, a quick little
20 definition as to what you are referring to?

21 DR. DiROCCO: Well, I think we need both, more
22 guidance counselors just so they have a closer relationship
23 with the kids that they're assigned to, so 1 for every 250
24 instead of 1 for every 400 or 500. You just can develop
25 better relationships, get to know those kids better. And

1 then those guidance counselors can make referrals to the
2 appropriate mental health agencies, to the parents and so
3 forth, when they are seeing signs in those kids.

4 Also, we need more social workers. Social
5 workers are that connection between the school and the
6 home, and they can often actually even go out into the home
7 and work with parents.

8 So I think both of those types of professionals
9 are in much greater need today than they have been in the
10 past.

11 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: And you referenced
12 ratios. Just so I understand, I'm imagining that there is
13 no ratio currently in the State of Pennsylvania as to what
14 would be appropriate for school populations?

15 DR. DiROCCO: I don't believe there's anything in
16 statute that regulates that or mandates that.

17 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Okay.

18 DR. DiROCCO: I might be incorrect, but I don't
19 think there's a regulation on that.

20 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
22 Tallman.

23 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 School Board President, in this committee report,
25 I'm not going to -- there were several lapses in reporting,

1 and I note the doctor here doesn't want to see any more,
2 but there are school boards where, you know, they didn't
3 report several areas in this committee report. But my
4 question is specifically for the business manager from
5 Central York, Brent.

6 So you visited York. By the way, Representative
7 Evans, I would like to go visit the City of York.

8 REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Any time.

9 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: I have been there many
10 times in the York School District. I never had a metal
11 detector, but anyways.

12 So how long does it take, because our school
13 board president said there is time consumed in getting
14 through. So what did you notice there as far as that?

15 MR. KESSLER: Certainly.

16 It takes about 30 minutes to get 500 students
17 through one entrance. And so they have three different
18 entrance points, and so the 1,500 students, they have 500,
19 500, and 500. It takes almost 30 minutes to get them all
20 the way through, from start to finish.

21 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Okay.

22 And Representative, I'll have my office contact
23 your office, and I'd like to go over.

24 REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Yes.

25 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
2 McCarter.

3 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 And again, thank you all very, very much for your
6 testimony.

7 There are two things I would like to try to real
8 quickly address. Number one is, all of you, all of the
9 testimony we have heard this morning suggests that
10 obviously the PlanCon situation needs to be dealt with.

11 We, many of us, know that this is one of the
12 things that I have tried to address over my 5 years here,
13 is that we are in a situation where we have hundreds if not
14 thousands of schools across the Commonwealth at this point
15 that are reaching their maximum viability, really, and we
16 have to replace them.

17 At the same time, the things that we're talking
18 about today in terms of safety are going to be redesigning
19 our buildings, potentially, in ways in which, again, I'm
20 not sure they are always the educationally best way we want
21 to deal with things such as, obviously, trying to get
22 people all through one entrance with metal detectors would
23 be a very difficult thing educationally. That's one area I
24 would like you to comment on in terms of the nature of the
25 PlanCon issue there.

1 The second thing is, in terms of guns in schools,
2 you know, so often we hear -- and I think all of you have
3 taken a position that you don't favor that. Is that
4 correct? Okay.

5 Again, the nature of accidental accidents that
6 happen in schools, I'm looking at something that suggests
7 already that so far in 2018, at least one person has been
8 killed and eight injured in school shootings deemed
9 accidents in schools already, and that's nationally over
10 500 people were killed last year in schools by accidents
11 with guns in schools. So putting more guns in the schools
12 doesn't seem to be something that I think we could surely
13 say reduces that risk of accidental deaths, given the
14 nature of that.

15 And again, if you would like to comment a little
16 bit more on that subject as to where best we place those
17 resources instead of training additional teachers or
18 whatever, even security personnel, for additional training
19 to make sure that schools are safe. If you have that
20 choice, what would best you, the one single thing that you
21 would all suggest?

22 MS. MCCracken: As I mentioned, PSEA has a
23 position of not allowing our school personnel to be law
24 enforcement officers. We are not opposed to the hiring of
25 school resource officers, trained security personnel,

1 working with the police departments around the State to
2 provide that security in our schools.

3 MR. FACCINETTO: Sure. And we would echo that
4 statement.

5 And even in our district in Bethlehem, we do have
6 eight resource officers between our middle schools and two
7 high schools, and that's, I think, where the trained
8 security needs to be.

9 On a personal note and things that I have heard
10 from teachers in the past couple of weeks since the tragedy
11 in Florida is that, tell us what to do; train us what to
12 do, whether that's providing the ALICE training, the active
13 shooter training for teachers. Just, they don't know what
14 to do in these situations if it happens.

15 So I think that's a way that we can focus some
16 resources, is to preparing the professional staff in the
17 building and the administrators to know what to do if
18 something like that happened, because I think now a lot of
19 what we do is fire drills and we may have a lockdown drill
20 or some kind of evacuation plan, but not some kind of
21 active shooter incidental training.

22 And to address the PlanCon issue, I think the
23 main resources that PlanCon could help with is outfitting
24 the secure vestibules. A lot of buildings do not have a
25 double-glass-door entrance where you just get buzzed in.

1 Updating cameras to more high-tech, high-definition
2 cameras for the secretary who maybe buzzes the front door
3 open to have a visual on the person. Adding more card
4 access to the back entrances of the buildings where
5 teachers may come and go in the morning from the staff
6 parking lot instead of just having that one main entrance
7 with a card access.

8 So those are all things I think PlanCon can help
9 with, but unfortunately, with the moratorium on that, there
10 can't be major renovation projects districtwide to maybe
11 outfit every single building with a double-glass door.

12 MR. BAUER: I would say that in terms of making
13 decisions, I believe at a local level, which has been
14 mentioned several times, is quite important, because each
15 school does have its own various and different needs.

16 And if we have security audits at the school
17 level, again, something that has been mentioned, then in
18 terms of my role here, the voice of the principal is
19 important in that, because there is nobody in the school
20 likely that knows more about the school and about the
21 strengths and weaknesses of the security efforts than the
22 school principal.

23 So we would just like to see those decisions to
24 be local, be individual, and have a voice from the
25 principal in those.

1 MR. KESSLER: Obviously, PASBO supports the
2 PlanCon initiative and would just simply ask for additional
3 funding or continue to fund PlanCon so the opportunities to
4 update schools' security systems, et cetera, vestibules,
5 can be continued. So we would support PlanCon.

6 And then the only other side from PASBO is, it's
7 really a local decision, and so up to local school boards
8 right now. Guns are not allowed for anyone other than
9 police officers, SROs. So if that law would ever change,
10 then it would be a local decision, needing to understand
11 all the risks, liabilities, insurances, that that would be.

12 So again, we would support additional funding for
13 SROs, school police initiatives, that type of thing from a
14 business side.

15 REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
18 Staats.

19 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 And again, thank you to our panel for this very
21 valuable testimony this afternoon.

22 I think you have all expressed concerns with
23 metal detectors, and I have three school districts back
24 home in Bucks County, -- Palisades, Quakertown, and
25 Pennridge -- and at least one is using captured vestibules,

1 it seems with some degree of success.

2 Conceptually, it seems like a good idea, a good
3 security measure, and I'm curious to get your thoughts.

4 DR. DiROCCO: I assume when you speak about
5 captured vestibules, that's when people come in and they
6 have to walk into the office first or they are in an
7 enclosed area where they can't get into the school without
8 checking into the office first.

9 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Correct.

10 DR. DiROCCO: Yeah. I can speak to that.

11 In my former district, we made sure that was
12 developed in all four of our buildings, and we did that
13 basically with our own dollars. We didn't go into a
14 PlanCon process, but we wanted to get that done so that
15 there was at least, you know, some hesitation for and some
16 check-in system for people to come in before they actually
17 had access to the entire building.

18 It took some time to do it. It took a period of
19 years to get it done, but we thought it was critical, and
20 we believe it does make a difference.

21 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Yeah. Thank you. And
22 maybe later the Architects could speak to that.

23 One other question, if I could, regarding the
24 Student Assistance Program. We know it's designed to
25 identify and intervene with students with drug and alcohol

1 problems and mental illness problems. So I'm curious, has
2 it been successful; and two, is there a mechanism in the
3 process that would remove the student from the school and
4 get them evaluated and/or help for their addictions or
5 mental illness?

6 MR. BAUER: Yeah. I could speak to that.

7 In having worked with many student assistance
8 teams over the years, I find that to be extremely
9 successful so that you have dedicated people trained to
10 help at-risk students and identify at-risk students in
11 every school building across the State of Pennsylvania.

12 So I think it's one of the stronger programs that
13 we do have, and I have seen a lot of results come from that
14 that get kids the help that they need and work students and
15 parents through a process that connects our school-based
16 resources with outside resources.

17 And that comes back to the need to have those
18 counselors, to have those school social workers. They are
19 invaluable. They sit as part of those teams, and they make
20 those connections between a student's academic day and
21 their school day and their mental well-being and what
22 resources we have to offer them and what additional
23 community resources they need as well.

24 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: And again, is there a
25 point in that process where that student is removed and

1 evaluated?

2 MR. BAUER: There can be, depending on --
3 depending on the situation, if there's a threat or not.
4 But we do have cases where we do require that a student
5 sees a mental health professional and gets the letter
6 deeming that they're not a risk to themselves or others
7 before they continue with their school day.

8 REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Okay. Thank you, panel.
9 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
11 Mullery.

12 REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And I want to thank all five of these speakers
14 for testifying to how important restarting the PlanCon
15 program is.

16 I know in my legislative district and in many
17 places throughout the Commonwealth, our schools were
18 constructed to be almost de facto civic halls. Like our
19 previous speaker spoke, it's where the Boy Scout meetings
20 occur. It's where the town musicals occur. It's where
21 several of the civic meetings occur. Our schools were
22 built to welcome people in, and now we're finding ourselves
23 in a position where we're trying to keep people out.

24 So without PlanCon, it's something that we just
25 keep putting ourselves behind the eight-ball. So I truly

1 appreciate your testimony in that regard.

2 I have two questions for Dolores.

3 I am very happy that you reached out to your
4 membership and asked them for input in preparation for this
5 hearing. I try to do that with my constituents before we
6 vote on important legislation.

7 My question is, either in the form of raw data,
8 the actual number, or a percentage, what level of teachers
9 that responded to your survey indicated a willingness to
10 either arm themselves or have their colleagues armed on
11 campuses?

12 MS. McCRACKEN: I don't have the percentages when
13 it comes to our survey because we just took people's
14 comments and we put them into our report. But I can tell
15 you that the National Education Association did survey a
16 random sampling of members, and 82 percent say they would
17 not carry a gun in school, and that includes 63 percent of
18 members who own a gun.

19 Sixty-one percent of gun owners oppose arming
20 teachers. Sixty-four percent of those are in households
21 where there are guns.

22 And 64 percent, they said they would feel less
23 safe if their colleagues were armed.

24 REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Thank you.

25 As I made my way around to my five school

1 districts in the wake of what occurred in Parkland, the one
2 caveat or exemption that people felt more comfortable with,
3 even those who didn't want to see teachers armed or school
4 personnel armed, was if it were a veteran or if it was, you
5 know, ex-military. Do you have any subset of statistics
6 from either your survey or those national surveys regarding
7 that as a potential solution?

8 MS. McCRACKEN: We heard from very few members
9 who are actually well trained to carry firearms. I will
10 tell you that the plans that they submitted were
11 thoughtful. They admitted that if this were to happen,
12 that even though they considered themselves to be
13 professionals, they knew that they were going to need
14 ongoing training.

15 And I will also add that I talked to two of them,
16 and they agreed that they did not want everyone in their
17 building able to carry a gun if they didn't have the
18 training that they had.

19 REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Thank you very much.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
22 Quigley.

23 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 And I thank all of you for your testimony on this
25 issue.

1 I had a question. I guess it was particularly
2 directed at Mr. Bauer and Dr. DiRocco.

3 You know, and I hate to date myself. You know,
4 you think back to when you were in high school and you were
5 growing up and the issues that were going on then, and now
6 these things have expanded. And I know, Doctor, as you had
7 mentioned, that children are now coming to school with
8 issues in greater numbers than, you know, than previously
9 that that happened.

10 So my question is, and just in the two of your
11 observations and your work as principals and school
12 administrators, what would you say, and again, it's just an
13 opinion, but what has changed, you know, from 10 years ago,
14 from 20 years ago, that's leading to these issues, and what
15 can we try to do as a, you know, as a Legislature, as a
16 society, to try to address some of this?

17 And I know it's a broad topic, but it just, you
18 know, it puzzles me when I talk to constituents, and, you
19 know, we just went through a period where we were out
20 gathering signatures to get on the ballot for our next term
21 and, in light of this recent shooting, talking to people,
22 particularly senior citizens. You know, they're just
23 baffled, too, as to what is going on with our younger
24 people. And if you could just share some of your
25 observations.

1 And again, I know it's just an opinion, but I
2 would be interested to hear what you have to say.

3 DR. DiROCCO: Yeah.

4 I certainly don't have, you know, detailed
5 research to back any of this up, but I can just tell you
6 from my perspective, you know, I just think the world is
7 more complex. I think kids are dealing with much more
8 today than they have in the past.

9 I think the compilation of social media and how
10 unfiltered that is and the amount of time students spend on
11 social media, sometimes it's difficult to get away from it.
12 It has many upsides as well, but there is a dark side to
13 social media, and when kids get, you know, steeped into
14 that, that can be very negative for them.

15 I'm sure the Principals Association can talk
16 about it; I don't know how many weekends I get into schools
17 on a Monday as a superintendent and I'm getting calls from
18 my building principals. They were dealing with behavioral
19 issues, threat issues, based on things that happened on
20 social media over the weekend, where threats were going
21 back and forth over social media between kids, and then
22 everyone was worried what was going to happen in school on
23 Monday morning. So I think that's an issue. I think
24 that's something that we need to work with our kids more on
25 of how to navigate that, how to be safe on it, and I know a

1 lot of schools are doing that.

2 I think that, you know, we just went through a
3 horrible recession, the greatest recession since, you know,
4 the Great Depression, and I think that put a lot of stress
5 on our families, a tremendous amount of stress. And
6 consequently, I think, you know, kids are feeling the brunt
7 of that.

8 I know I was in a more of an advantaged district
9 in the Lewisburg Area School District, but we saw our
10 poverty rate, our kids on free and reduced lunch, increase
11 significantly. Since the 2006-2007 school year to the time
12 I left, it went up significantly. So I think you had a lot
13 of families under stress, you know, parents working
14 multiple jobs, trying to make ends meet; the advent of
15 social media.

16 And I just think our civil discourse as a nation
17 has, you know, become elevated and to the point that it's
18 very, very negative. And the kids are viewing that,
19 monitoring it, and they're having difficulty navigating it.

20 And so that's why, once again, just getting back
21 to that concept that we need more caring adults in the
22 schools who can develop positive relationships with kids
23 and help them through all these issues that they're dealing
24 with, whether it's, you know, the economic issues they're
25 seeing their parents struggle with or the social media

1 issues that they and their friends are dealing with, I
2 think all that plays into it.

3 MR. BAUER: Yeah. Those are the exact thoughts
4 that I had, so I won't mirror too many of them. But social
5 media was the first thing that came to mind and the
6 difference between my own high school experience and what I
7 see kids go through today.

8 And as you mentioned, you know, we do have those
9 threats that occur sort of outside the school day in the
10 nebulous, the Internet, sometimes anonymous, and kids are
11 dealing with that in all kinds of ways. So we do work with
12 kids in school about digital citizenship and this new level
13 of social responsibility that students have and that my own
14 kids are going to have, who are currently in kindergarten
15 and second grade. And I've already thought a lot about,
16 you know, as they rise through the grades here and mature,
17 how do I as a parent maneuver them through the world of
18 social media and the Internet, and I take that
19 administrator viewpoint of it, because I can see, we see
20 the negative effects of it, unfortunately.

21 Talking about weekends, so that's what I spent
22 like most of my day Sunday on. So it's not that it's
23 theoretical; it happens regularly. So on a regular basis,
24 we're dealing with -- again, we're glad that students are
25 comfortable identifying what they may deem to be a possible

1 threat or an incident of bullying. And then that's
2 something that is followed up on, again -- and just a
3 recent experience I had this last Sunday -- by a teacher,
4 several administrators in my school, including myself, our
5 security director, and the superintendent and local police.

6 So we're getting used to how to handle these
7 situations and how to get to the root of them. But over
8 the larger societal issues, I'm not a hundred percent sure
9 if I could, you know, put a finger on exactly why there are
10 greater mental health needs in high schools today.

11 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Just a quick follow-up.

12 Do you find in your experience in these issues of
13 bullying where you get the parents involved, and again, I
14 hate to date myself, but I just think back to when, you
15 know, my parents were approached and my friends' parents
16 were approached by school officials. You know, there were
17 consequences to me or to my friends, you know, from the
18 parents taking the word of the school official to say, what
19 are you doing in school; you know, why are you behaving
20 like this; why, you know, am I being called about this. Do
21 you find now, is that the same attitude, or is there a
22 different attitude of, you know, for lack of a better term,
23 overly defending the child as opposed to perhaps taking
24 more to heart what the comments are from the school
25 officials?

1 MR. BAUER: In my experience, I find parents to
2 be fantastic partners. It's usually just a communication
3 issue.

4 When you can get open lines of communication with
5 parents so that they are understanding the entire breadth
6 of what the situation is from both sides -- from the
7 student's perspective, the teacher's perspective -- they
8 are excellent partners. Because we have, at heart, the
9 same goal, is the safety of their child and every child in
10 our school. So even if initially maybe sometimes that's
11 off, once we communicate more, parents, in my experience,
12 are as great a partner today as they ever were.

13 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
15 Phillips-Hill.

16 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 Thank you very much for your testimony.

19 Having served as a school board director, again,
20 in the aftermath of Sandy Hook, we made many of those
21 structural upgrades to our buildings without PlanCon money,
22 and so I am painfully aware of the costs that are
23 associated with those upgrades as well as the financial
24 challenges that our school districts and our local
25 property-tax payers face.

1 Many mandates pull money directly out of the
2 classroom into efforts that don't improve the educational
3 quality of our children nor the safety of our children, our
4 staff, and our communities. I have legislation that would
5 reinstate the mandate waivers that school districts had
6 under the Rendell Administration.

7 How much money do you believe such legislation
8 enacted could be generated or could provide to our local
9 school districts to plow directly into school safety
10 initiatives?

11 DR. DiROCCO: We would have to do some research
12 on that for you and get back to you. But certainly any
13 type of mandate relief that would free up dollars for
14 school safety would be much appreciated. And if that
15 legislation was put into effect, I'm sure, you know, most
16 districts would take a hard look at it and ask for those
17 waivers so they could reallocate those dollars.

18 REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: As a
19 follow-up, I would appreciate that information being sent
20 back to us, to the Chairman and the Education Committee
21 staff.

22 There are certain things that I know right off
23 the top of my head would save us a tremendous amount of
24 money. Some of them are controversial, some of them are
25 not. But your input and your perspective on what mandates

1 we could waive and the potential savings to those mandate
2 waivers would be very much appreciated.

3 Because we are facing significant financial
4 challenges, both here at the State level and back home in
5 your local school districts, and we want to be able to give
6 you the resources and the tools that you need to keep our
7 children, our staff, and our communities safe, and that's a
8 conversation that we're going to have to have. Your input
9 would be essential.

10 Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
12 Brown.

13 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Thank you again, all of you. Such a massive
15 amount of information for us that is very helpful.

16 And actually, right on the heels of
17 Representative Phillips-Hill, the discussion of the waivers
18 and possibilities of savings for you at the school district
19 I think is very important, because one of the concerns that
20 I had during one of the testimonies was the fact that the
21 statement was made that we cannot reallocate any funds
22 towards security measures. And that concerns me, because
23 the fact of the matter is, as was said, we're on tight
24 financial restraints here and as well as you are at the
25 local level.

1 But I believe that oftentimes the reallocation
2 and the priorities of how we spend our money is a
3 conversation that has to happen as well. And sometimes,
4 you know, it's the educational piece or it's the safety
5 piece, but if the kids are not safe, they can't learn, and
6 that's a very important piece.

7 And I just don't like to hear that kind of
8 statement, so I hope that we can help you, as
9 Representative Phillips-Hill said, but I also hope that the
10 efforts are truly there at the local level.

11 I understand completely the local level
12 decisions, and as I mentioned before, you know, I am the
13 sponsor for the metal detectors in our schools, so that is
14 something that I feel very strongly about. The funding for
15 this, like you said, is very strong.

16 The other concern that I have is that oftentimes
17 we may use local control as an excuse not to get something
18 significantly done that would make a difference, and when
19 we struggle with making sure local control is given and
20 decisions are given and the people of Pennsylvania in our
21 districts want something significantly done to make a
22 difference for safety, we are pressured very strongly to
23 make that happen. And that's one reason that we're looking
24 and I'm looking for ways to fund this for the local
25 districts.

1 So with funding being allocated, and on top of,
2 I know, officers or people to man the entrances -- and then
3 I'm going to ask one more question in regards to the
4 backlog with the York District -- would there be, your
5 feelings, on new money that is allocated from our State
6 budget every year, and this year, right now, the proposal
7 is 100 million, but new money that is allocated to the
8 school districts being utilized first to fulfill safety
9 measures before utilizing it for anything else. What are
10 your thoughts on that?

11 MR. FACCINETTO: Sure.

12 I think, first of all, the conversation of
13 reallocating dollars occurs every year in school districts
14 when they start their budget process in late December,
15 early January, and work to a final approved budget in the
16 end of June. So as budget dollars are limited and the
17 conversation of can we raise property taxes any more, how
18 much can the citizens tolerate, the conversation is always,
19 how do we move money around? What can we cut to fund this
20 or fund that program? And certainly in the past month
21 alone, there has been a lot of discussion around, how do we
22 reallocate some of our own funds to upgrade security
23 measures that maybe had been on the list to do for 5, 6,
24 8 years.

25 In our own district every year in November, we

1 talk about what summer projects are up for next year, and
2 we have this growing list that is somewhere in the
3 neighborhood of \$200 million in Bethlehem -- now, we have
4 22 buildings -- of things that need to be done. Some
5 things are simple, like replacing lights with LEDs. Well,
6 that's great, but is that really going to affect the
7 education? No.

8 So we look at some of the more pressing matters.
9 Security has now been thrown into that, where maybe that
10 vestibule upgrade at the one elementary school has been put
11 off. Now that comes on the front burner.

12 So if there is new money, if there are new funds
13 that are allocated specifically for security, certainly
14 districts would do that. If the increase that comes
15 through the education funding formula this year, the
16 districts see a priority need for security measures, I
17 would hope that they would certainly do that.

18 Can districts commit that any new money is going
19 to go into security? I don't know. I think that's unfair
20 to say, because each district is a unique situation.

21 If you're a smaller district that has one campus
22 with three buildings that are all connected and have
23 up-to-date security features, then I think spending money
24 on something that isn't needed just to say we spent money
25 on security wouldn't be the best use of the dollars. But

1 certainly in districts like mine and others that have some
2 aging facilities, we would welcome new money to spend on
3 updated security.

4 Metal detectors, certainly I know that's your
5 sponsored bill, and I know we're sort of in the same
6 neighborhood of, you know, the Poconos and the Lehigh
7 Valley, but it's something that I think is a local control
8 issue, because I think some communities absolutely want to
9 see metal detectors, and that makes the parents feel safe;
10 it makes the students feel safe. And I think in others,
11 that's not the way they want to spend their money. They
12 say, I don't want to send my kids to school where they have
13 to walk through a metal detector and get scanned every day,
14 because I do think there is a false sense of security to
15 some point.

16 Certainly the conversations are starting of what
17 would it look like, even in districts like my own where we
18 do not have them, what would it look like to put those in
19 place? How many would it take? Because without putting a
20 dollar amount on it and really seeing what the
21 implementation would look like, I think it's unfair to say,
22 no, we're totally against it. We have to do our homework
23 on that, as we do on everything else.

24 So certainly the conversations are there, whether
25 it's mandate relief, whether it's new money from the

1 General Assembly and the Governor. Security is going to be
2 top of the list this year, I think, in a lot of districts.

3 DR. DiROCCO: Yeah. And I would just like to
4 clarify, we certainly do not mean to state that any
5 reallocation of dollars would not be welcome or, you know,
6 be appropriately used or wouldn't be a good idea. We
7 believe it is. But to do all the things that this panel
8 has talked about, we're not sure a reallocation of dollars
9 is going to be enough to get all those things accomplished
10 -- adding staff; you know, refiguring school buildings;
11 bringing more armed security into the schools. I think
12 we're talking about a lot more dollars than can be
13 reallocated to those different venues.

14 The other thing in regard to the new money,
15 there's 100 million new being proposed for basic education.
16 About 86 million of that is going out to the 499 districts,
17 about 14 million is going to one district. So there's not
18 a lot of new money there. And, you know, I know the one
19 issue that everyone at this table can talk about is almost
20 all those dollars are probably just going to go right to
21 the pension system.

22 So, you know, consequently, there aren't a lot of
23 new dollars to be putting into school safety. Even if
24 schools would choose to use those dollars for school
25 safety, they're going to see an immediate loss right away.

1 I think we all know that, you know, the pension
2 system over the last 7 years, 8 years, has increased by
3 over \$4 billion, a combined effort by the State and the
4 local districts. So that's \$4 billion that, you know, is
5 not going back to the classroom.

6 So, you know, consequently, with those kinds of
7 constraints on us, once again, that's why I keep getting
8 back to our point that somehow we're going to have to find
9 the resources to get this done. I'm not sure we can get it
10 accomplished just by reallocating what's already there.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you.

12 And I know this is very difficult, so I do
13 appreciate your honesty and understanding from where we're
14 coming, as well as your side.

15 The other question, quickly, I had, which I think
16 is for Brent, you mentioned you took a visit to the York
17 District, and in the Poconos District that I have, I have a
18 lot of New York, New Jersey, influx back and forth, and we
19 have a lot of retired New York teachers and Jersey
20 teachers.

21 And New York, there were several teachers that
22 are retired that came to me and said, you know, we've had
23 metal detectors for years in New York, Rosemary, and they
24 worked very well, and these are urban districts with a very
25 large amount of students. So whether they had three

1 entrances or four entrances, you know, all those details
2 would have to be pulled.

3 But with the fact that you visited, and you did
4 say 500 students every 30 minutes, I think? So after you
5 left there -- and I think that's a concern that we are all
6 concerned about if we were to implement any sort of metal
7 detector. But when you left and your overall feeling from
8 your meeting, did that district feel that it is definitely
9 benefiting them? Were they talking about how they were
10 working to improve that? Were there any sorts of
11 suggestions that they had that they said, you know, we can
12 make this better and this is how we're going to do it?

13 And how did you feel overall walking away from
14 there, that you knew the obstacles they have. Let's take
15 dollars aside. Let's just put the dollars over here, which
16 I know is very difficult to do, because we're having a
17 financial and then we're having a security. But on a
18 security standpoint, how did you feel walking away saying,
19 if money wasn't the obstacle, I'd do it or I wouldn't do
20 it?

21 MR. KESSLER: Yeah.

22 Again, York City had a wonderful process. They
23 have been doing it for several years. They gave us a lot
24 of great feedback. Again, they would be ones that could
25 provide additional information directly to their district.

1 But we had a great opportunity to see the
2 process. They gave us a lot of feedback of what we could
3 do; how we could make it faster, more efficient. But
4 again, within 20 minutes, 25 minutes, the majority of them
5 were all in until those last couple of stragglers come
6 through.

7 So we have the fishbowl, the secure vestibules at
8 all of our buildings as well, so how would it look? We
9 talked through setup, we talked through entrance points, to
10 be as efficient as we could. And so it was a great
11 opportunity. They do a wonderful job. It's very seamless.

12 They do, again, to hear directly from them, but
13 they obviously said it has helped them over the years.
14 They felt very good about having them in place at their
15 high school. So they had great feedback for us, and again,
16 it was a wonderful experience.

17 I can't answer personally. You know, walking
18 away from there, you know, Central York School District is
19 a suburban school district. We have diversity across the
20 board. We go from, you know, 40 percent free and reduced
21 to million-dollar homes, and so we have it all. So I don't
22 know what it would look like for Central York to have that.

23 As a parent, I don't know what it would mean for
24 our elementary school, for my kids to have to go through a
25 metal detector every day. I don't know -- personally, I

1 don't know if that would give me a sense of ease or if it
2 would make me feel like they're going to prison for the day
3 and, you know, worrying about, you know, is that a need.

4 So personally, I can't answer that. I think our
5 school board is going to discuss it in the next couple of
6 months. We have budget workshops in April. We have all
7 the additional costs and information. Again, it will be
8 their consideration if they want to do it for Central York.
9 So it's definitely a sensitive situation.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Thank you.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
13 English.

14 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

15 Thank you, panel.

16 You know, schools, it's a beehive of activity,
17 and we want to preserve it. That is our community. I
18 mean, I love walking past my school and seeing what's going
19 on. My kids have graduated, but I still want to know what
20 activity is there and what phase of life people are in as
21 they're coming in and out, day, night, weekends, and we
22 want to keep that, but we also got to balance it with the
23 safety of teachers, faculty, and staff.

24 I don't know the term of art, but I'll say a
25 troubled youth or a youth of concern. I'm sure each school

1 has so many proportionally. Do you have an idea of what
2 that percentage is or what that historically has been, and
3 then where does it hit the danger zone? Because it just
4 seems like with all the mounting pressures and life
5 troubles and bullying, the number of those students is
6 going up as far as teaching and administration and being
7 principals and the school board.

8 So do you have any just kind of gut sense? I
9 know it would be hard to describe, but in talking to my
10 principals and superintendents, you know, they gave me
11 numbers. I'm not going to say a number, because it's not
12 relevant compared to other school districts. But is there
13 a percentage that you know in your high school or your
14 school district that you can give me historically or
15 where you think it's moving to that emphasizes to us it's
16 much more complicated now why we may need additional
17 resources?

18 Anyone?

19 DR. DiROCCO: Well, I'll just talk from my
20 experience.

21 My district was about 2,000 kids, just a little
22 less than 2,000 kids, and I would say in any given year we
23 probably, across the district, had 10 to 20 students that
24 we were very concerned about, so approximately a half a
25 percent to 1 percent of the population.

1 They had extreme behavioral issues, extreme
2 concerns on our part. We would often, you know, get them
3 referrals to mental health agencies or, you know, the
4 appropriate counseling agencies, whatever; work with the
5 parents to try to get them the help they needed.
6 Oftentimes these students would end up with an emotional
7 categorization for IEP and perhaps even be placed in a
8 program outside of the district for extreme behavioral
9 concerns.

10 So those were the rough numbers that I can, you
11 know, recall. But even though those numbers may not seem,
12 you know, large, they can consume a tremendous amount of
13 time and effort on behalf of a school building, the staff
14 in that building, and a lot of time with that family and
15 parents and a lot of other outside agencies.

16 So, you know, these matters can really consume
17 tremendous amounts of time as you're trying to work
18 something that is going to, you know, develop this child in
19 an appropriate way so they can get back into the
20 mainstream.

21 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Anyone else? Thank
22 you.

23 MR. BAUER: Those aren't percentages that we
24 necessarily, that I necessarily track in terms of my school
25 and how many at-risk kids I have at any one given moment.

1 But I think one data point that we could look at
2 is the number of kids that do go through the SAP
3 programming in our school and schools across the State.
4 That's something that we do report out at the end of every
5 year, and probably those numbers could tell us something
6 about the number of kids that require those kinds of
7 services now as compared to maybe in the past.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
10 Madden.

11 REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12 And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your
13 testimony.

14 I'm going to start with Brent, but I will
15 certainly welcome anyone's answer to this question.

16 So I represent Monroe County. I neighbor with
17 Representative Brown. And my concern, the idea if we were
18 to implement metal detectors, is, would this expand the
19 academic -- I mean, at 500 students per half hour, if a
20 school has 1,200 students, would we have to lengthen the
21 school day? Would we shorten the amount of time that they
22 are actually learning?

23 Because I know as it stands in my neighborhood,
24 there are children in the dark waiting for the school bus.
25 I mean, how much sooner would they need to go to school?

1 When would they get out? How would this, you know, affect
2 their day?

3 MR. KESSLER: I'm definitely not the expert. The
4 superintendents or principals, I'm sure, could weigh in on
5 that.

6 Personally, I would hope that we wouldn't, you
7 know, shorten any school day, for my own kids' education as
8 well, whether it meant buses had to come even earlier or
9 whether it meant we just needed more access points. But,
10 you know, the educational experts can obviously speak to
11 the classroom piece of that.

12 MR. BAUER: I can simply tell you, in my school,
13 we have the building open for 35 minutes. We open the
14 building at 7 a.m., and the instructional day begins at
15 7:35. So we do not have metal detectors, but we have
16 35 minutes where we have students coming into the school
17 building.

18 I think there's a little less time at the middle
19 school level with that, and I know there's much less time
20 at the elementary level, again, because as kids are
21 younger, they require a greater level of supervision.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
23 Grove.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you all. I
25 appreciate it.

1 Brent, you're the finance guru on this thing, so
2 I want to focus on you. Congratulations.

3 MR. KESSLER: Sure.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Let's talk about grants
5 versus ongoing costs.

6 So we're discussing multiple facets of school
7 safety. You have the hardware side and then you have the
8 personnel side. Kind of like the main line item in our
9 budget is the school safety initiative. It is a grant. So
10 I know within most school budgets, you necessarily don't
11 count on grants every single year, Ready to Learn Block
12 Grants. You kind of build it in, but as a grant, you don't
13 necessarily guarantee that money in and out.

14 So when we're looking at hardware costs versus
15 personnel costs, I would assume your preference for
16 hardware would be under grants, because that is a one-time
17 initiative moving forward. Personnel, you want something
18 more dedicated, long term, correct?

19 MR. KESSLER: Correct. And, I mean, I can't
20 elaborate any more. That's spot on. So the grant money,
21 it's always that fear that it would not be funded year two
22 or three or four or would be reduced from year one to two
23 to three.

24 So grant money would buy the hardware, outfit
25 everything, the supplies. And then if there is additional

1 funding, that could be permanent, or additional basic ed
2 funding that would help fund the long-term costs, the
3 personnel costs. Yes.

4 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yeah. Maybe if we had a
5 2-year budget cycle like we used to, we could have more
6 consistency within budgeting, but year to year it's tough.

7 MR. KESSLER: Yes.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: So when we're looking at
9 -- let's go back. I want to go over PlanCon.

10 Obviously, there's a moratorium. To be honest,
11 there is probably going to be another moratorium coming in.
12 Good or bad, it's just a reality of where we're at on that.

13 To date, with Act 25 of 2016, which provided
14 bonding to reimburse school districts for that, obviously
15 there was no way under the current program we were going to
16 catch school districts up in the next 30 years with PlanCon
17 dollars that were promised to reimburse.

18 To date, there was, in '16-17, \$567 million
19 paid out; last year, 255 million. So to date, that's
20 \$822 million were reimbursed back to school districts.
21 Projected, \$148 million estimated this year.

22 I don't see Matt Stem in the room. Is anybody
23 else from PDE still here? Oh; hey.

24 Could you get us an update what projects are left
25 in that and where they're at in the system, when you get a

1 chance. It would be nice to know where we stand on that.

2 So roughly a billion dollars at the end of this
3 fiscal year will be paid back and reimbursed to school
4 districts. That current bond allocation is approved up to
5 \$1.5 billion to be issued by June 30th of 2025. According
6 to the Governor's budget book, they're still at
7 \$168 million of balance left in there.

8 I'm not a big fan of bonding, but we're talking
9 about school security and infrastructure improvements which
10 are going to last the next 30 years. Bonding is normally
11 an appropriate use of infrastructure payments. Based on
12 that this deals with school construction, you could
13 probably do a lot of good with \$168 million for school
14 construction moving forward in a bulk lump sum, correct?

15 MR. KESSLER: Correct. And that would be PASBO's
16 stance, to obviously have that dedicated funding put
17 towards the school, you know, construction and renovation
18 process. That would go to a lot of good use.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

20 And then as far as the hardware, metal detectors,
21 the thought process I have always had is the State can do a
22 larger purchase at a cheaper cost than individual school
23 districts.

24 Now, not every school district would want, say,
25 metal detectors or other hardware, but would it be better

1 for the State through the school safety to do a bulk
2 purchase order for those things to lower the overall cost
3 for school districts and then have the school districts buy
4 in when they want them or we send them out? Would that be
5 a better way to do it, less cost?

6 MR. KESSLER: Yeah.

7 Anytime to leverage economies of scale to save
8 some money for our taxpayers would be great. And so it
9 would be interesting to see how that exactly would work if
10 you would, you know, the State would order 10,000 of them,
11 and then if in August we called up and said, well, I need
12 six or eight of those, it would be interesting to make that
13 work.

14 But sure, why couldn't we look at all options,
15 again, to save taxpayer dollars. That's where we're always
16 looking to be most efficient. So I would love to entertain
17 that opportunity.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you. Thank
19 you very much.

20 Thank you, Chairman.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you. That
22 was our final questioner.

23 Thank you all very much for your time and your
24 patience. And I know we have all benefited from your
25 testimony and answers today. Thank you.

1 PANEL III:

2 NATIONAL APPROACHES TO SCHOOL SAFETY

3

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Okay. If our next
5 group of testifiers could come forward.

6 I think we all recognize that just because we
7 live in Pennsylvania, we don't have all the answers. So we
8 reached out to some national organizations, and we're
9 fortunate today to have two of them with us to share with
10 us, you know, their expertise on what's happening, you
11 know, in other States across the nation.

12 So we welcome Lauren Sisneros from the Education
13 Commission of the States, and Jennifer Palmer from the
14 National Conference of State Legislatures.

15 And ladies, you may begin when you're ready.
16 Thank you for being here.

17 MS. PALMER: Good morning.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair and Committee. Thank you
19 for inviting me here today.

20 My name is Jeni Palmer, and I currently track
21 school safety legislation for the National Conference of
22 State Legislatures.

23 NCSL serves all 7,383 State Legislators in all
24 50 States, including all 253 Pennsylvania Legislators. Our
25 mission is to strengthen State Legislatures, and we do this

1 in three ways.

2 First, we are proud to be one of the nation's
3 most respected sources of bipartisan policy research and
4 technical assistance. Second, we convene meetings and
5 seminars to connect Legislators and legislative staff to
6 the latest research, topics, and each other. And third, we
7 advocate on behalf of the State Legislatures before the
8 Federal Government. I support all this work as a research
9 analyst in the Education Program, covering a wide range of
10 issues, including school safety.

11 And I have been invited here today to provide an
12 overview of legislation on firearms in K-12 schools, while
13 my colleague from the Education Commission of the States
14 will address additional school safety topics. My role is
15 to explain the current landscape of State statute, as well
16 as recent legislative trends. NCSL has no position on
17 these issues in any form and fully respects the rights of
18 States to enact policies that they see fit for their
19 constituents.

20 To begin, the Federal Gun-Free School Zones Act
21 prohibits firearms in, or on the grounds of, or within a
22 thousand feet of the school. Some States have expanded
23 their definition of "school safety zones" or "gun-free
24 zones" by specifying school buildings, property owned by
25 school districts or adding "school functions" such as

1 activities taking place at a different location, and/or
2 school buses.

3 Almost every State generally prohibits firearms
4 in K-12 schools. However, nearly all make one or more
5 exceptions to their laws. For example, almost all States
6 exclude law enforcement from their ban on firearms. And at
7 least 21 States extend this exemption to school safety
8 officers or school resource officers, who are law
9 enforcement officers specifically operating within schools.

10 In our review of State statute, we have
11 identified at least 17 States that allow anyone with
12 permission to carry a firearm in a K-12 school. Permission
13 must come from a school authority such as the school board,
14 superintendent, or principal.

15 At least seven States allow concealed carry
16 license holders to carry firearms in K-12 schools.
17 However, three of those require permission from a school
18 authority.

19 And with the recent addition of Florida, at least
20 eight States specifically identify school employees who
21 meet certain requirements as exempt from the State's ban on
22 carrying firearms. Those requirements may conclude a
23 concealed carry license, completing a background check,
24 additional trainings, and I will get more into those
25 specifics in a minute.

1 We know of at least one State, California, that
2 previously allowed local authorities to give permission to
3 school employees to carry firearms, but as of late last
4 year, has since repealed their law.

5 Only a handful of these States included their
6 exemptions in carrying firearms within their original
7 statute. There was a significant increase in States that
8 were amending their statute to allow for more local control
9 over who can carry firearms in the early 2000s after
10 Columbine and again in 2013 following the tragedy in Sandy
11 Hook, and we're seeing a similar trend right now.

12 In the current legislative session, we are
13 tracking legislation in at least 16 States to allow more
14 people to carry firearms within K-12 schools. Those may
15 include concealed carry license holders, school security,
16 or in some States, school employees.

17 Of the 8 States that specifically name qualifying
18 school employees as exempt from their bans on carrying
19 firearms, and the 13 that are currently considering this
20 legislation, a few common themes emerge.

21 First, they all leave the decision for school
22 employees to carry a firearm in the hands of local school
23 authorities. Second, they are all voluntary. No employee
24 is required to carry a firearm. Third, they require school
25 employees to have a concealed carry permit or otherwise be

1 authorized to carry a firearm.

2 Most States require employees to assume the cost
3 of their weapon and potentially a required training, which
4 brings me to another trend.

5 Training programs for school employees authorized
6 to carry firearms are currently in place in at least three
7 States -- Missouri, South Dakota, and Texas -- with Florida
8 to soon join their ranks. We know of at least six more
9 States -- Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, South
10 Carolina, and Washington -- that are currently considering
11 these types of programs.

12 In these programs, volunteer faculty and/or
13 administrators are typically appointed by school
14 authorities or may apply and then be approved by school
15 authorities to participate in a training program.

16 Programs are offered by law enforcement agencies,
17 and in addition to advanced firearms training, they may
18 include training in topics such as emergency response,
19 weapon retention and disarming, use of force, CPR, combat
20 first aid, and others. Programs vary in the number and the
21 type of school employees who are allowed to participate as
22 well as the authority granted to those school employees who
23 have completed the training.

24 I'll just close by saying that school safety and
25 firearms in K-12 schools are complex and rapidly evolving

1 issues. And at NCSL, we are tracking over 120 pieces of
2 school safety legislation just since the Parkland shooting.
3 We'll continue to follow these issues at the State and the
4 Federal level and are here to support your work.

5 You can find additional information on our blog
6 and, soon to come, our new webpage on school safety, and
7 I'll be happy to get in touch with you following today to
8 give you more information.

9 Thanks.

10 MS. SISNEROS: Good afternoon.

11 Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss
12 State-level school safety policy. My name is Lauren
13 Sisneros, and today I am providing this testimony as a
14 representative of the Education Commission of the States.
15 ECS is a neutral third party.

16 At ECS, we believe in the power of learning from
17 experience. Every day, we provide unbiased information and
18 opportunities for collaboration, because informed
19 policymakers create better education policy.

20 We do this in four ways. First, we compile
21 information on education policies from early childhood
22 through postsecondary education and the workforce. We
23 issue relevant and timely reports. We are available to
24 provide unbiased advice on policy plans and propose
25 legislation and also provide testimony. And we also bring

1 education leaders together within their States and across
2 States to interact, to collaborate, and learn from each
3 other.

4 Each of our States is represented by ECS
5 Commissioners in the State, and on page 2 of your handout,
6 there is a list of the Pennsylvania ECS Commissioners.

7 Today, I will be providing an overview of
8 State-level policy as it relates to school safety plans,
9 school resource officers, and bullying. While not
10 exhaustive, the policy examples shared provide a general
11 sense of the school safety landscape.

12 First, I'll talk about school safety plans.

13 School safety plans basically outline how schools
14 and school districts will handle emergency situations, and
15 according to our research, we have found that at least
16 34 States require schools to implement a comprehensive
17 safety or emergency plan. If you refer to the map on
18 page 4, you will see the States reflected in the color
19 purple.

20 Of the 16 States that do not require plans, some
21 of these States incentivize the creation of safety or
22 emergency plans by providing grants or technical assistance
23 to schools or school districts.

24 In addition to safety plans, some States have
25 also implemented an oversight board such as a school safety

1 council or committee to study school safety. These groups
2 look at school safety as part of a larger policy issue in
3 the State, and many of the boards are charged with
4 reviewing safety plans, issuing grants, drafting
5 legislative recommendations, and designing model safety
6 plans.

7 After reviewing the statutes in the 34 States
8 that require schools to have a safety plan, several things
9 were evident.

10 State's statutes usually direct school boards or
11 school districts to develop the safety plan. However, some
12 States, like Minnesota, Rhode Island, South Carolina,
13 Tennessee, Utah, and West Virginia, require the plan to be
14 based on a State-modeled plan. Schools are available to
15 take the model plan and make it their own, and Ohio is an
16 outlier in that it requires the Board of Education or each
17 city or other governing school authority to create that
18 plan.

19 In addition, many statutes require that the
20 State plan be developed in consultation with specific
21 individuals. This includes law enforcement, community
22 members, parents, school employees, and in Arizona, it also
23 includes the consultation with mental health professionals,
24 and in Wisconsin, it requires the consultation with
25 criminal justice services.

1 I would like to talk a little bit about emergency
2 response drills, and we found that at least 25 States
3 require schools to carry out periodic emergency response
4 drills other than fire, tornado, and shelter-in-place
5 drills. Page 5 of your handout identifies those 25 States.

6 According to the National Center for Education
7 Statistics, 95 percent of schools currently perform these
8 kind of lockdown drills, so that indicates that it may not
9 be in statute, but it's a common practice across the
10 States.

11 The Education Commission of the States also found
12 that at least six States specifically require active
13 shooter training in schools. Those States are Arkansas,
14 Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, and Tennessee.
15 We have seen pending legislation this year in California,
16 Florida, New York, and South Carolina, and the Pennsylvania
17 Legislature was also introduced with Senate Bill 35 last
18 year in 2017.

19 On page 6 of your handout, I provided a
20 comprehensive school safety policy from Rhode Island, and
21 on that slide it includes key elements of that public law.
22 And some of those key elements include protocol for
23 responding to threats, hostage takings, intrusions, and
24 kidnappings; policies for responding to acts of violence;
25 policies for contacting parents; and access to a student's

1 prior disciplinary records.

2 Next I'll talk a little bit about school resource
3 officers, and schools have long allowed school resource
4 officers in schools as a part of their school security
5 plans. And according to The Council of State Governments,
6 as of 2013, 29 States have statutes that require school
7 resource officers to be sworn peace officers. We have seen
8 that State policy ranges regarding school resource officers
9 from training requirements to funding.

10 And on page 7 of your handout, I provided two
11 policy examples from Alabama and Colorado regarding school
12 resource officers. For example, Colorado requires that the
13 school resource officer is a peace officer with specialized
14 training that works with staff and students to create a
15 safe learning environment. And these school resource
16 officers may carry weapons when authorized to do so under
17 the written firearm policy of the employing agency.

18 I have also provided some proposed policy
19 examples from the 2018 legislative sessions from Illinois,
20 Florida, and Missouri.

21 In Florida, there is a bill that encourages
22 schools to place school resource officers in school, and it
23 would establish funding requirements.

24 Finally, I would like to talk a little bit about
25 bullying, because I see that the list of your bills that

1 you are considering touches on bullying. And so as
2 you know, there has been a growing awareness around
3 bullying, and that has resulted in an increase of policy
4 proposals.

5 Two examples that I brought forward are Delaware
6 and Illinois. So in Illinois, there's a requirement that
7 all schools create, maintain, and implement a policy on
8 bullying. And in Delaware, it's similar, that the schools
9 are required to coordinate trainings, and also, the
10 districts and charter schools are required to adopt the
11 State's uniform cyberbullying policy.

12 In addition, I have also provided some
13 information about State-level parental notification
14 requirement examples. So in New Jersey, they require
15 that school principals inform parents and guardians of all
16 acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying. And in
17 Rhode Island, it also requires that there are procedures
18 for promptly notifying the parents of a victim and a
19 perpetrator.

20 On page 9, I have provided some key resources,
21 and I would like to highlight the first one.

22 On our website, there is a State Information
23 Request about school safety issues. We are consistently
24 tracking and analyzing legislation about these issues, and
25 we're updating that State Information Request to help

1 policymakers be aware of the most recent policy
2 proposals.

3 And finally, my contact information is on the
4 last slide, and if you should need any additional
5 information about school-level safety plans, school
6 resource officers, or bullying policies, I would be pleased
7 to provide you with further assistance.

8 Thank you.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you,
10 ladies.

11 Questions from Members?

12 Okay. I'll throw one out.

13 Jennifer, you had talked a little bit about the
14 various States that had, you know, situations where they
15 allowed or permitted, you know, certain school personnel to
16 be armed.

17 I recently read that Texas has, I believe it's
18 referred to as the "school marshal program." Are either of
19 you familiar with that that you could share any details
20 with the Members of the Committee?

21 MS. PALMER: Sure.

22 I believe I included, since Missouri, South
23 Dakota, and Texas all have similar programs, in Texas it's
24 called the school marshal program. Missouri, I believe, is
25 the -- one of them, South Dakota, is the sentinel program.

1 They all have different names. And Florida's school
2 guardian program is very similar. They all require a
3 certain number of hours. I think it ranges from 80 to
4 130 hours of training.

5 As I said, they are voluntary. They have to be
6 approved by school authorities to participate. And each
7 State sort of varies on how many employees within the
8 school are allowed to participate.

9 So in Florida, Florida's recent legislation, for
10 example, there is no cap on how many school employees
11 participate, but I believe they do not allow classroom
12 teachers. That was in their final one. And in Texas, for
13 example, it is one school employee per 400 students.

14 So they all vary a little bit, but I'm happy to
15 give you more specifics if you would like me to follow up.

16 MS. SISNEROS: I would just add that the Texas
17 School Safety Center has a district audit report for
18 findings on safety and security in Texas school districts,
19 and that might be a good resource.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

21 Representative Gillen.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you very much for
23 your testimony, ladies.

24 Harkening back to my period as a correctional
25 officer, and even as a homeowner, we always thought in

1 terms of expanding the perimeter. You had an outside
2 patrol, cameras, observation. What would you think of a
3 crime-watch-oriented model where it was not intervention
4 oriented but rather observe and report outside of the
5 perimeter of the school?

6 So that you might have adult school safeties, for
7 lack of a better term, and they merely were armed with a
8 vest, enumerated, as well as a communication device so that
9 they could report any suspicious activity outside of the
10 school. And perhaps we could even use seniors, and as
11 property taxes are subject to challenge in our community
12 rebate, perhaps a portion of their property tax.

13 And so we have a very efficacious crime-alert
14 model that exists in our own community, and it has been
15 recognized statewide in terms of its import for observing,
16 reporting, leading to arrests, apprehension, and
17 conviction.

18 And so do we have anything out there that runs a
19 parallel track that you have observed, or perhaps you could
20 do some original research, in expanding the perimeter of
21 observation without requiring that person to actually
22 intervene but report to a central authority?

23 MS. SISNEROS: I can definitely take a look and
24 go back to staff and see if they have seen any policies
25 about that. I do know that there are reporting tip lines

1 that have been created in---

2 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Would you mind getting a
3 little closer to the mic?

4 MS. SISNEROS: Oh; sure. Sure.

5 First, I can get back to you on some additional
6 policies. However, I am aware of some State policies that
7 require or establish a tip line for any member of the
8 community to report acts of violence, threats, or
9 harassments. But I'm not aware off the top of my head of
10 anything that would expand observation, but I can
11 definitely look into that.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
15 Tallman.

16 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 And Ms. Palmer, you mentioned the Texas marshal
18 program, and we do school governance here in Pennsylvania.
19 I think we do it different than every other State, but
20 anyways.

21 How much participation of the school district,
22 and then what have the communities thought in those places
23 where they have implemented the marshal program?

24 MS. PALMER: Unfortunately, I just track
25 statutes, so I'm not tracking the implementation or the

1 local level at this time, but I'm happy to look into it.

2 I know that the Texas program has been around.
3 It's one of the first ones. It has been around for, I want
4 to say at least a decade. So there should be some research
5 to find out how far widespread it is.

6 I don't know that off the top of my head, but I'd
7 be happy to look into it.

8 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: How about acceptance in
9 the communities that have done it?

10 MS. PALMER: I don't know that off the top of my
11 head, but.

12 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: If you could get
13 that---

14 MS. PALMER: Sure.

15 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: ---and submit it to our
16 Chairman, I would appreciate it.

17 Thank you.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Any other
19 questions?

20 You did such a good job in your testimony, there
21 are very few---

22 Thank you very much, ladies, for coming all this
23 way to Pennsylvania. We appreciate it.

24 MS. PALMER: Thank you.

25 MS. SISNEROS: Thank you.

1 PANEL IV:

2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE

3 SCHOOL SAFETY

4
5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: And last but not
6 least, our final panel can begin to move toward the table,
7 if they would, please.

8 We have Stevens Krug, who is a Principal with
9 Krug Associates and represents the Architects Association
10 of Pennsylvania; Mark Zilinskas from the Indiana School
11 District. He's a high school teacher; Professor Sarah
12 Daly, St. Vincent College; and David Helsel, Superintendent
13 of Schools with the Blue Mountain School District.

14 And Mr. Krug, do you want to begin whenever
15 you're ready, sir, and thank you all for being here.

16 MR. KRUG: Thank you.

17 Good morning, Chairman and Members of the
18 Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide
19 testimony today regarding the vital issue of ways to
20 improve student and school safety.

21 I am Steve Krug. I'm an architect in West
22 Chester. I have been designing schools and higher
23 education facilities for over 35 years. And I represent
24 AIA Pennsylvania, a component of the American Institute of
25 Architects, representing the voices of nearly 3,000

1 registered architects throughout Pennsylvania, and many of
2 our members are nationally recognized authorities on school
3 planning and design.

4 I am also the parent of a 12-year-old child who
5 this year had a bomb scare at his school and was evacuated,
6 so I have a recent memory of those concerns.

7 I'm here today to talk about designing safe
8 schools. We need to have a conversation on what can be
9 done to make our students safer at schools and our
10 communities while maintaining and nurturing a learning
11 environment.

12 Two ideas that can be implemented immediately are
13 establishing a statewide emergency management plan for the
14 design and configuration of school buildings and security
15 infrastructure; and two, the publishing of an assessment
16 tool to use as guidelines for school districts to gauge
17 priorities. We suggest a group to develop these
18 assessments that would be made up of an interdisciplinary
19 coordination group of architects, teachers, students, and
20 law enforcement.

21 One of the largest concerns regarding school
22 safety in Pennsylvania is the age of our schools. More
23 than 65 percent of the schools in Pennsylvania were built
24 before 1970. Many of these schools have been renovated
25 over time to upgrade their services, educational

1 opportunities, and safeguards, but far too many have
2 not.

3 As school architects, our members have walked
4 through these numerous facilities that do not have even
5 the most basic safety measures. Examples include
6 administration offices remotely located from unmonitored
7 school entrances, exterior doors that lead directly into
8 classrooms, classrooms unable to be properly locked down,
9 and lack of security cameras both on the campus and inside
10 the building.

11 Some of the best practices that we use as
12 architects are, such as Crime Prevention Through
13 Environmental Design. That is a checklist that we use when
14 we're designing for the design of resilient, secure
15 facilities that not only protect our students but help them
16 to thrive in a nurturing learning environment.

17 There is always the challenge when we are
18 designing to make a welcoming community environment that
19 you have talked about, as well as a protective one and a
20 safe and secure one for exiting as well as arrivals.

21 School safety and security can be addressed
22 through comprehensive planning and by integrating building
23 features that also serve to provide comfortable learning
24 environments. I have a number of examples and ideas for
25 those that include:

- A locked vestibule that we have all discussed, which provides a main entrance that enables visitors to be formally screened before gaining access to the school.
- Security cameras provide a real-time video to district administrators and police.
- A building-wide communications system that allows anyone anywhere in the building to warn everyone of a security threat.
- Classrooms with strong, solid doors and a robust locking system to secure the space from any intruder.
- Site design -- that's the area around the building -- to control and improve visibility at access points, including alternative entry points for first responders and flow of parking and drop-off zones.
- Various thresholds and gateways can make would-be intruders think twice before entering.
- Use of laminated glass for security, and dual-purpose safe rooms designed to be utilized for everyday recreational groups and to provide for a shelter-in-place function in an active shooter situation.

- Use of durable material such as masonry and reinforced glass at intruder breaching locations, and outer perimeter configurations that enhance perimeter security while blending into the overall environment.

Beginning in 2016, AIA Pennsylvania began a series of public forums designed to bring together experts in the field of school construction, including State Legislators, school superintendents, general contractors, and architects. Initially intended to support the debate on PlanCon, this series of presentations showcased the complex facets of school construction in the Commonwealth, including a panel devoted to school safety with keynote speakers Svigals + Partners, the architects that redesigned the Sandy Hook Elementary School. PlanCon, a State-run reimbursement mechanism for school construction, can be a means to help pay for safer school design and construction.

AIA Pennsylvania recommends updated, coordinated safety assessments that focus on school facilities in the Commonwealth to gain a better understanding of the scope of work that needs to be done to secure our schools. Our members have the tools and resources to help collaborate with school districts and law enforcement to guide communities and safely secure them.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you,
2 and I'll take questions.

3 MR. ZILINSKAS: My name is Mark Zilinskas. I'm a
4 mathematics teacher at Indiana Area High School. I am the
5 teacher that approached Senator White shortly after the
6 Sandy Hook attack, and I encouraged him to come up with
7 what is now Senate Bill 383.

8 I think my testimony is important for you to hear
9 today, because I'm someone who will be there if such an
10 attack would occur at my school.

11 I'm a two-time graduate of the FASTER training
12 program, and I think that can be some important
13 information. Hopefully you'll ask me about that later. It
14 has been responsible for training over 1,300 teachers in
15 the State of Ohio, who are out today, as we sit here today,
16 in schools who are armed and have gone through training.
17 So I went through that training twice.

18 I apologize ahead of time for maybe some
19 unpleasant thoughts I'm going to share with you, but I go
20 through this every day. And just to ask you all, can you
21 imagine anything worse than somebody shooting the students
22 that you know and love and not being able to stop them?

23 We just had our lockdown drill the other day, and
24 we conducted it during a change-of-class period, and the
25 goal was to get the students out of the hallways and in the

1 rooms and lock the rooms. Can you imagine having to decide
2 when to close that door? And if there were students who
3 were shot in the hallway or just trying to get in, at some
4 point you have got to make that decision of when to close
5 that door.

6 I don't know all the details about, you know,
7 Mr. Beigel from Parkland, but from what I understand, he
8 was trying to get more students in his room when he was
9 shot and killed.

10 Can you imagine trying to stop this killer
11 from killing kids when he entered your building, like
12 Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach did at Sandy Hook. Both
13 of them died because they knew what was going to happen,
14 and they died trying to stop the killer.

15 Can you imagine being one of the teachers, again,
16 that were behind that building and have to live the rest of
17 your life knowing that you didn't, didn't do anything to
18 stop him.

19 And the last unpleasant thought is Victoria Soto.
20 There was nothing left to do. The killer got in her room.
21 She just put her body in front of her students and died
22 trying to protect them.

23 I really appreciate all of the discussion
24 earlier. I got here a little bit late, but I was able to
25 hear a lot of the preventative measures, and there's a lot

1 of good ideas. And believe me, I hope that they work and
2 there's never another school shooting that can't be
3 prevented. But I also think if we're honest with
4 ourselves, we know that those break down at some point.

5 There's a student at our school that almost fits
6 the profile of the kid in Parkland. We tried all of the,
7 you know, the counseling, the interventions in terms of
8 that. Finally, the parents were uncooperative. He got
9 removed from the school. He's one that a lot of our
10 faculty members think could possibly come back, and I don't
11 think we're ready as a society to lock somebody up and put
12 them away before they do anything wrong.

13 All of what was discussed earlier, like I said,
14 was mainly on preventative measures, but Senate Bill 383,
15 or I believe Representative Dush's 870, is the only one
16 that really talks about the intervention period.

17 We're going to call 911. The police are going to
18 get there. Unfortunately, we have seen too many times,
19 they just can't get there fast enough and that a lot of
20 lives can be lost in that 5 minutes.

21 I told myself, I'm going to act. I'm going to
22 act. I'm not going to wait for the police. I'm not going
23 to wait behind the door. Those options that I talked about
24 earlier aren't very productive, because the two things that
25 have to happen during that 5 minutes until the police get

1 there is that person who is killing the kids must be
2 stopped, and then, as soon as possible, have people there
3 to start administering to whoever is injured. And the
4 people that we need most aren't there, the police and EMS.
5 And we all know that EMS isn't going to make it into the
6 building until the police clear it.

7 The FASTER training in Ohio,
8 Faculty/Administrator Safety Training & Emergency Response,
9 addresses those two issues, and it's for that 5 to
10 10 minutes until the police get there and can take over. I
11 think it's something worth looking at. I think it's a
12 layer that's vital and necessary in order to protect our
13 kids. Because like I said, some teachers will act in those
14 critical minutes and do whatever is necessary to protect
15 those kids. They're important to us. We love them like
16 they're our own.

17 Thank you.

18 DR. DALY: Thank you, Representatives Hickernell
19 and Roebuck and Members of the House Education Committee,
20 and also to Representative Reese for having me here today.

21 As a St. Vincent College professor and a
22 researcher of mass shootings and school violence, I
23 appreciate the opportunity to testify here.

24 I have spent 7 years studying events like the
25 tragedy in Parkland, Florida, and I use my 11 years in

1 public education in New Jersey as a Spanish teacher and a
2 school counselor to ground my research in experience and in
3 practice.

4 I would like to keep this short for your sake and
5 mine and to present four suggestions for your
6 consideration. I bring them to you today with an eye
7 toward practicality, toward safety and research, and I hope
8 that they might offer guidance to you as you examine bills
9 related to school safety.

10 The first focuses on knowing the warning signs.
11 So while the increased number of student threats has been
12 alarming in the recent month, it is also inspiring to see
13 that other students recognize the seriousness of these
14 threats and that they are reporting them.

15 In the same vein, teachers and administrators and
16 parents need to be able to recognize more subtle warning
17 signs such as a pseudocommando mentality, a fascination
18 with school shooters, and novel aggression.

19 The use of an anonymous tip line to report
20 threats and concerns is immensely helpful. However, it
21 should also be supplemented with the incentivizing of
22 programs designed to educate the community and parents
23 about warning signs.

24 The organization Sandy Hook Promise offers free
25 programs like "Know the Signs" and "It Starts With Hello."

1 These programs are founded in research, and they have
2 clearly defined curricula for schools for easy
3 implementation.

4 Further, there should absolutely be a partnership
5 between schools, law enforcement, and mental health
6 professionals, because they need a truly streamlined
7 process to address the threats and to provide the help that
8 troubled teens need.

9 With a focus on warning signs, I also ask you to
10 consider Extreme Risk Protection Orders as they relate to
11 schools. This would allow for a safeguard that retains
12 Second Amendment rights for all citizens but also allows
13 families and law enforcement, and therefore schools, to
14 petition a court to temporarily suspend a person's access
15 to firearms. In the face of documented evidence that an
16 individual is threatening to harm himself or others, he
17 must surrender his weapons and cannot buy, sell, or possess
18 firearms for up to 1 year.

19 In my research, I found that about 40 percent of
20 the school shooters exhibited some type of warning signs
21 about potential violent behavior that included clearly
22 stated verbal threats. So in those instances, an Extreme
23 Risk Protection Order could have saved lives, and so, too,
24 could it have saved lives in Parkland, Florida.

25 Secondly, I would urge caution against arming

1 teachers, respectfully so, even if only a select few. If
2 there is even to be a discussion about it, I would strongly
3 suggest conducting a thorough problem and policy analysis
4 before implementing it. This would allow lawmakers to
5 consider the unintended consequences, examine prior cases,
6 and then also consult with law enforcement about their
7 responses.

8 Third, I noted the number of proposed bills
9 related to bullying, and this is certainly an important
10 issue facing children, especially given the research on the
11 impact of cyberbullying in adolescence and social media.
12 However, I would also point out the ways that these types
13 of policies would impact schools and support staff.

14 So in a time when educators are often overwhelmed
15 with increasing responsibilities, both in the classroom and
16 out, it's important to recognize that State-mandated
17 bullying policies require additional time and resources.

18 As a highschool counselor in a State with
19 comprehensive harassment, intimidation, and bullying
20 legislation, I can tell you that addressing these issues
21 was profoundly time-consuming. It was certainly within the
22 scope of my job description and it was important work. It
23 required me to also then devote my time and take time from
24 other students who may have felt overlooked or ignored in
25 school.

1 So if you consider implementing these policies,
2 you should also consider supplementing them with additional
3 funds for more support staff, including counselors and
4 student assistance coordinators, so that more students and
5 all students will have access to resources and help.

6 And finally, in establishing a commission to
7 review policies, I recommend that you include policymakers,
8 practitioners, organizations, and researchers also. In
9 doing so, it would ensure that they are evidence based and
10 founded on theory and research. I understand the urgent
11 need to implement policies for immediate change, but they
12 should be well planned and evaluative in nature.

13 So in sum, I believe that these future policies
14 and bills should be considered in terms of community
15 partnerships and efforts. This burden is not one for
16 schools to bear alone -- and they can't, frankly -- and we
17 all share a responsibility to our children to consider all
18 possible outcomes and effects.

19 So I thank you again for the opportunity to
20 testify and your commitment to addressing school safety
21 issues.

22 DR. HELSEL: Good afternoon.

23 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you
24 today. As we all agree, student safety considerations are
25 of paramount importance.

1 This issue is much too complex to look towards a
2 singular solution. I encourage you, the Legislature, to
3 grant school districts some latitude towards their efforts
4 to keep our students safe. Our districts are very diverse
5 in population, geographic size, staffing, and financial
6 constraints. As stated earlier in other panels, a
7 one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective or
8 feasible.

9 One of the ideas being discussed here would be
10 arming teachers and/or other district personnel. The
11 Blue Mountain School District has been arming school
12 district personnel for 5 years through assigning district
13 maintenance staff to dual roles: that of armed security
14 through the Act 235 certification process, as well as
15 district and maintenance, building maintenance,
16 responsibilities. They have gone through the training
17 required, the hours, the certifications, weapons
18 certifications, and everything required for armed security
19 certification spelled out through Act 235.

20 We initially had two individuals trained and
21 armed. We currently are down to one such individual due to
22 a retirement. We have identified additional individuals
23 for the training and are exploring those people being
24 trained. They are currently maintenance and technology
25 support, the people that go around and fix the students'

1 and teachers' computers.

2 Our district has been training our staff and
3 students in an armed intruder defense plan, referred to as
4 ALICE. Many of you may have heard of it or have become
5 familiar with it. ALICE is an acronym standing for Alert,
6 Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. As you may be
7 aware, this training was developed by law enforcement
8 professionals in response to previous school shootings like
9 Columbine and Virginia Tech. ALICE empowers teachers and
10 staff to determine whether emergency evacuation or
11 barricading doors themselves into a room is the best
12 response.

13 Each room is being equipped with a device that
14 makes entry into the classroom extremely difficult, if not
15 impossible. In addition, every classroom has been equipped
16 with a 5-gallon bucket full of river stone. If an armed
17 intruder attempts to gain entrance to any of our
18 classrooms, they will face a classroom full of students
19 armed with rocks, and they will be stoned.

20 In addition, we do not presently plan to or would
21 not, if given the opportunity, train teachers as Act 235
22 armed security due to their role in our planned response to
23 armed intruders. Our plan requires teachers to lead their
24 classroom's safety efforts. They will need to decide
25 whether or not to supervise the evacuation of their

1 students to a rallying point or barricading their classroom
2 and preparing to defend and getting our students out of the
3 line of fire.

4 The response to address is we carefully selected
5 the people who would have access to be into the schools
6 quickly but would not have a primary responsibility of
7 supervising a classroom full of students. Our plan does
8 not mean that we do not support granting other districts
9 the option of arming teachers or other school personnel; it
10 just does not fit with our personal plans and circumstance.

11 I personally recommend that school districts be
12 empowered to make the individual decisions regarding armed
13 personnel. Each district has unique situations where
14 safety plans should be custom fitted to their
15 circumstances.

16 It is my opinion that identifying people with the
17 correct skillset, personality, stress tolerance, and
18 attitude is more important than job title. Providing the
19 selected staff members with high-quality ongoing training
20 is also a critical component of this endeavor. They must
21 be trained properly and be responsive.

22 And also, we need to make sure that anybody that
23 is armed is also in uniform or some type of identifying
24 characteristic when any police would respond and avoid any
25 accidental shootings due to friendly fire.

1 I would also ask that you consider a few other
2 things. I do thank you for your streamlining the
3 comprehensive process by joining strategic planning and new
4 teacher induction planning and Act 48 professional
5 development planning and technology planning and special
6 education planning, so you grouped those all together into
7 a comprehensive plan. I would strongly, and I heard
8 through rumors that new comprehensive planning will require
9 it, but I would encourage you to require every district to
10 also complete a safety plan every 3 years, just like they
11 do for all the other areas of school operation. Include
12 that in the comprehensive planning.

13 I would ask you that you consider mandating
14 interagency training and cooperation, not just a memo of
15 understanding that you revisit every 5 years but actually
16 have them sit down and work. We have a web-based camera
17 system that we could grant access to local law enforcement
18 and other things and meeting and becoming familiar with
19 facilities and getting to know, and also talking and
20 alerting each other of potential threats or concerns. It's
21 critical also that people recognize each other and
22 understand what all the protocols will be with the
23 different agencies and organizations.

24 A lot of people are talking about bullying. I
25 call it students being disenfranchised. I think schools

1 need to be able to do positive things and find out what
2 triggers cause students being disenfranchised, not
3 connected to their schools, feeling isolated. Those are
4 common. Sometimes it's bullying; sometimes it's mental
5 health; sometimes it's a number of other things.

6 We test for proficiency in reading and math and
7 science every year of students. I encourage us to consider
8 some type of assessment process to see if they are
9 basically a danger or something in some way or capacity.
10 It doesn't need to be a big long thing, but some way of
11 trying to identify students that are at risk.

12 In addition, you know, everybody was asking for
13 money. I do think that if necessary or possible, money
14 could be provided for armed personnel, as stated earlier,
15 but also money for training existing personnel if you
16 choose to arm them. And that has to be an ongoing thing.
17 If you are going to arm anyone, they not only need initial
18 training but they need continued training, and they also
19 need to be certified with their weapon on a regular basis.

20 I believe that cameras are very important,
21 upgrading. Some people mentioned the cameras, because you
22 can identify them. And it's truly amazing, some of the
23 new, the advances that people have made in cameras.

24 But also, cameras are important not only as a
25 precaution or to catch people getting injured or whatever,

1 but in the case of, as somebody stated, if we do have an
2 armed intruder, we have presently, we can have other people
3 that are not stationed at that building remote in and
4 actually communicate through the loudspeaker system to
5 students and teachers.

6 What we have learned from Columbine and things of
7 that nature is that it's important to communicate where the
8 intruder would be, and the best thing to do is to get the
9 students, if the armed intruder is nowhere near where that
10 classroom is, evacuate and get them out of the building and
11 to a rallying point. So if you have moneys for an upgraded
12 intercom system where people can remote in, view, identify
13 where the armed intruder is, and tell them where they are.

14 Much like in Florida. Nobody announced where the
15 intruder would be, and some of them ran right back into the
16 building into harm's way. So I think we can learn that
17 cameras and intercom systems and communication devices to
18 communicate to schools where the armed intruder would be
19 could be beneficial and save lives if in case something
20 like that would happen.

21 As you noticed and mentioned, when we're talking
22 about PlanCon, our schools were made with a lot of glass,
23 and I'm not sure that every district can afford to replace
24 every window with bulletproof glass. There are films and
25 materials that you can add and put on windows that would

1 make them a little bit more secure and a little bit more
2 resistant to being broken.

3 I sat recently at our middle school, and I'm
4 looking at a wall of glass, and I'm there, my goodness, how
5 would you stop an armed intruder, but we could at least try
6 to slow it down by safeguarding and adding things to our
7 windows and other devices to strengthen them.

8 There's a lot of other equipment to secure doors
9 and devices. A lot of people mentioned metal detectors and
10 things of those things as well. But I think there are a
11 lot of great ideas out there that could help improve the
12 safety, and so I would ask you that you consider some
13 grants and some financial support for those endeavors.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you very
16 much. Thank you all.

17 Just a quick question, maybe for Mark and David
18 since you're on the ground, you know, in schools every day.

19 We heard earlier from one of our panelists, prior
20 panelists, that an unscientific survey that was recently
21 done of schoolteachers showed that there was virtually no
22 support among schoolteachers statewide for arming teachers
23 or school personnel.

24 I'm just curious, as two guys who are on the
25 ground in schools, you know, what is your experience in

1 talking with other teachers and school personnel, you know,
2 the level of support that would be out there in your school
3 district, Mark, and in your school district, David, you
4 know, for arming teachers or school personnel?

5 MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, we have, right now,
6 50 teachers in our building, and there are probably over
7 15 to 20 of them that have concealed carry permits already.
8 All of them would be at least interested in pursuing it and
9 getting the training, if that opportunity existed.

10 Now, that's just in our building. I know
11 throughout our district, we have six buildings, and I know
12 I have spoken to teachers in other buildings, and I would
13 say at least four or five in each of those buildings.

14 I have also had a large number of teachers in
15 our building who also said, I would never want to do this,
16 but I would feel good if you were here. And, you know,
17 again, it's not for everybody, you know, because of the
18 training.

19 If you go to a notable training like I did out in
20 Ohio, developed by John Benner, you just don't show up and
21 pass. There is a very, you know, stringent training
22 program along with the qualification, and actually, the
23 qualification exceeds what Ohio police officers have to
24 exceed in terms of the firearm qualification, so.

25 But I can honestly say, you know, again, in our

1 district, that there is a strong interest for it, because,
2 again, they have those same thoughts that I have had: What
3 are we going to do for those 5 minutes until the police get
4 here.

5 DR. HELSEL: My experience is fairly similar.

6 Some teachers and staff members would not be
7 comfortable doing it in any way. Some would be very
8 concerned about being secured in. If you are in a lockdown
9 and being overpowered, much like, you know, people --
10 that's why there's only one gun on an airplane. In case it
11 would ever be in a lockbox, so some people have brought
12 those types of ideas up to me during discussion.

13 Some feel like they have connected to kids, and
14 God forbid if it was actually one of the students they had
15 in class, whether or not they would even be able to do
16 anything because they care about a kid, even if they are
17 the armed intruder. Some people aren't comfortable with
18 taking the life of another individual regardless.

19 So there were a lot of opinions. Some were
20 interested and willing. Some felt if they had experience
21 and would be interested in the training. Some were very
22 much not; they did not have any interest in the slightest
23 in that endeavor.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

25 Chairman Roebuck.

1 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 I wanted to ask Mr. Krug, in terms of the concept
4 of a locked vestibule, which sort of focuses everything on
5 one entrance to a school building, if I'm understanding it
6 correctly, I understand how that perhaps is a good thing
7 for someone trying to get into the school, but what about
8 someone trying to get out of the school?

9 So if there were an internal emergency in that
10 school, what happens then to all those people in the school
11 who have to, I assume, go through basically this one
12 entrance to get out?

13 MR. KRUG: For school design, we have to design
14 all of the exiting for an emergency to get people out.
15 That's in the building codes. It's called emergency
16 exiting requirements, and we do calculations on the number
17 of people and how fast we have to get them out. That's the
18 first thing that happens.

19 The getting in through a vestibule, that has a
20 couple of different functions, and you can have a single
21 vestibule, or if you design the building for a large
22 school, you may have multiple entrances. You can have
23 multiple vestibules, which was described earlier, three
24 entrances for the high school in the City of York, for
25 instance.

1 And the vestibule concept is that in the morning
2 when students are arriving and there is supervision,
3 teachers, administration, that is out there supervising the
4 arrival, that those doors are open and you can walk right
5 through the vestibule. The idea then is that when school
6 is in session then, that the vestibule is closed and you
7 then have to enter through the vestibule and then through
8 the main office and get checked in so that you are
9 registered as a visitor. That's the concept of going in.

10 But that free or controlled flow in or out of the
11 building when it is supervised is for egress and emergency
12 sake.

13 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Suppose there were a
14 boiler explosion and the school catches on fire. Does that
15 mean everyone has to go out through that procedure, through
16 the office, to get out of the building?

17 MR. KRUG: No, only---

18 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Because one of the
19 issues certainly is that you also have to close off
20 alternative entrances to the school. I guess I'm having a
21 problem with, I know that in my district, we have a lot of
22 older school buildings.

23 MR. KRUG: Yeah.

24 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: There was a problem
25 -- and I'm from Philadelphia. The problem was that kids

1 would go into a school using these exits and let people in
2 and out, breaching the security process. And at one point,
3 they began to lock those doors, put chains on them, which
4 means you can't get out of those doors.

5 MR. KRUG: That would be illegal.

6 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: So with your system,
7 though, there is a way to get out of the doors even when
8 you have this system that no one can get in?

9 MR. KRUG: Yeah. It's called panic hardware. It
10 allows you to go out during a panic situation, during a
11 fire or any other time, and then those entrances are not
12 open for general use but they are open for exiting during
13 an emergency.

14 MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Okay. Well, I look
15 forward to some further conversation on this, and I
16 appreciate your testimony.

17 Thank you.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
19 Reese.

20 REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 And I first want to start by thanking the panel.
22 Your testimony, I think, is very valuable, and I hope it's
23 a source of information for us when we are developing our
24 legislation.

25 So today we're joined by one of my constituents,

1 Pastor Werner, and Pastor Werner is a member of a group in
2 my community called Christians Uniting, and it does some
3 pretty good work in our community. And they have actually
4 partnered with one of our public schools and have an
5 afterschool program where students and parents, if they
6 choose, can go to one of our local churches and have
7 activities and a snack after school. It has certainly
8 proved to be beneficial in our community.

9 And my question really is for Dr. Daly and
10 anybody else who would like to chime in on it. Has your
11 research -- and I know you have done extensive research on
12 these issues. Has your research showed any benefit to
13 having faith-based programs tied to our schools, in that
14 way. And I understand it's tied to our schools, but
15 somewhat separate. Can you give us any information on
16 that?

17 DR. DALY: Right.

18 So from a criminological theory standpoint, we
19 say that when there are social bonds present, so either
20 through institutions or families or relationships, then
21 crime is less likely to occur.

22 If we look at this in relation to school
23 shootings, there are reasons that the captain of the
24 football team is not committing the school shooting. So I
25 think that anything we can do with any institutions is

1 important.

2 So I didn't find any relationship specifically
3 with faith-based organizations, but I would say that any
4 commitment or attachment or belief to an institution or an
5 organization, or just people in general, I think would have
6 a profoundly deterrent effect for something like this,
7 because you're creating a situation in which there is
8 something to lose in terms of either disappointment or
9 relationships.

10 REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Okay. Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
12 Quigley.

13 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
14 and thank you for your testimony as a panel.

15 Dr. Daly, in your research, are there any common
16 themes or threads of these shooters? You know, is there
17 severe dysfunction in their families? Is there, you know,
18 bullying? Are there any common themes there?

19 And, you know, the whole idea of mental illness,
20 and I think that's something that obviously is going to be
21 a part of the discussion here. But, you know, is it -- and
22 I know some people even in the mental health community are
23 concerned about this labeling of "mental illness" when
24 there are, you know, a variety of illnesses, some severe
25 and then some that, you know, are fairly common among

1 people in the various stages of their lives.

2 But, I mean, in your research, have you seen, you
3 know, a common thread that you -- in some of those examples
4 that I gave, is there a commonality there?

5 DR. DALY: So when I started out with my
6 dissertation research, I initially started with the common
7 causes that people tend to blame, so bullying, mental
8 illness, violent video games. And what we have to look at
9 is that there are millions of children and millions of
10 students every day that experience any number of those
11 factors and don't go out and commit horrific acts of
12 violence.

13 So what I wanted to do instead was to look at the
14 conjunction of different issues, and what I found most
15 commonly with school shooters was that there was at least
16 symptoms, there were at least reported symptoms or a mental
17 health diagnosis before the attack in about 25 percent of
18 school shooters from 1966 to 2012, but most importantly,
19 that that combined with other instances of failure, so
20 let's say like social failure or relational failure. And
21 so there's not really a temporal aspect to it that I can
22 point to, if the mental illness affected social
23 interactions first or if the social interactions kind of
24 exacerbated mental health issues.

25 But I think we have to be very careful about

1 issues of mental health and talking about it because it's
2 such a broad spectrum. You know, we saw with the Sandy
3 Hook attack that there was a discussion about autism and
4 Asperger's disorder, which is profoundly rare that we would
5 see a really violent attack like this. And so that could
6 stretch, the spectrum could stretch all the way to bipolar
7 disorder or schizophrenia.

8 So when we say mental health, we have to be very
9 careful, but we have to look at it in the context of a lot
10 of other things, like socializing, friendship, stable
11 family lives. But what I found most often is the
12 interaction of a number of different factors.

13 So when I hear about approaches that kind of
14 throw everything at the wall to see what sticks, it's not
15 the worst idea, because there are a lot of things that we
16 have to address all at once, and it's not just that we have
17 to do them singularly but rather we have to address them at
18 the same time.

19 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: And in your research, if
20 you're looking, you know, let's go back to let's say the
21 1950s to the present. There were obviously acts of
22 violence that took place in the 1950s, '60s, '70s. Is it
23 more? Has there been a spike in these types of instances
24 in, let's say from year 2000 to the present as opposed from
25 going to 2000 back to 1950?

1 DR. DALY: So what's hard is that when we look at
2 the data -- I started my research in 1966 with the attack
3 at the water tower at the University of Texas, if some
4 people remember.

5 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Right.

6 DR. DALY: But it's hard, because things were
7 underreported then, right? With the 24-hour news cycle, we
8 have a lot more information now. So even cases that we
9 might not have heard about in the fifties, sixties, or
10 seventies, that affects what we know about the occurrences.

11 What I will say is that 1999 was one of the
12 deadliest years for school shootings. I would point to
13 Columbine as being kind of a turning point.

14 And what I would say now is that we're seeing
15 them kind of in rapid succession, and I would absolutely
16 point to the news cycles but also kind of this idea of
17 making these school shooters famous. There is a push
18 nationally among mass shooting researchers; there are about
19 150 of us that have signed a petition to not name the
20 shooters anymore.

21 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Right.

22 DR. DALY: That we are giving ignored and
23 overlooked marginalized children free publicity so that
24 there is something to be gained, in a sense. So if we take
25 that away, then there might be a different reward to that.

1 But there has absolutely been an increase in the
2 numbers, and especially in the past 20 years.

3 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay.

4 And then Mark, if I could, a question for you.

5 And again, you're from Indiana County in the
6 western part of the State, and, you know, in your testimony
7 about the police response time, you know, some of my
8 colleagues who are from that area -- and I brought this up
9 with the Major and the State Police. And again, nothing
10 against, you know, I'm not taking any decisionmaking away
11 or trying to say that the State Police aren't doing their
12 job.

13 But do you find that in an area like yours that
14 is more rural than let's say where I'm from, down in
15 Montgomery County, the southeastern part of Pennsylvania,
16 that there might be more of a support for your type of
17 approach as opposed to, if I were to propose this down in
18 my area, there might not be as much support. Do you see a
19 cultural, for lack of a better term, in Pennsylvania, an
20 east versus west cultural divide on this issue?

21 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

22 I think, you know, again, and people have been
23 saying all day long, you know, every situation is going to
24 be different and it should be, you know, ultimately up to
25 the local control.

1 But I could tell you, you know, Indiana --
2 actually, Indiana Area High School is in the town of
3 Indiana where Indiana University of Pennsylvania is. We do
4 have actually a borough police force. Some of our schools
5 are within that jurisdiction, some are out. We have the
6 State Police that patrol, and we also have the county
7 sheriff's office is near there. Now, there may be deputies
8 there or not. And also, the university itself has its own
9 police force. They don't really have any type of
10 concerted, you know, cooperative with one another on who
11 would respond, but I think that's something that they're
12 working on.

13 But there are districts nearby me, and I can tell
14 you, at Marion Center, there was a domestic dispute that
15 carried over, which Marian Center is about 10 miles from
16 Indiana, Pennsylvania. And we have some of our -- we do
17 have one resource officer at our senior high school
18 building, not in the other five, and he tells the story,
19 when he got the call at the barracks, which was in Indiana,
20 he drove 130 miles an hour to get there, and it took him
21 10 minutes to get there, but he got there. And it was,
22 again, a spouse that came in and pursued somebody and shot
23 her in the school.

24 But schools like that, you know, there the
25 response time can be anywhere from 15, 20, 30 minutes, and

1 again, that's an awful long time to endure an attack like
2 we saw in Parkland, and I think it would be much more
3 receptive.

4 I know a lot of teachers have contacted me,
5 because what I did when I first learned about, you know,
6 Ohio, the State of Ohio who has, I think, over 200 school
7 districts who have armed teachers in them now, and so the
8 people in Ohio actually refer them back to me to kind of
9 see where the status is in Pennsylvania and so forth. So
10 there has been a lot of inquiries I have received over the
11 last several months, actually, with smaller districts that
12 are rural and not in the city schools.

13 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: And, Mr. Chairman, if I
14 could, just one more.

15 Again, Dr. Daly. Real quick.

16 DR. DALEY: Yes.

17 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: In your examination of
18 these school shootings, is there a differentiation between,
19 say, someone who is under the age of 21 and then people who
20 are over the age?

21 Like Virginia Tech, these college shootings,
22 obviously that person is, you know, in their early 20s.
23 Have you seen a difference in motivation or a difference in
24 why the person who is under 21 acted versus the person who
25 is over 21?

1 DR. DALY: There is a growing body of research
2 now that looks at active and mass shootings across the
3 board, that if we just look at school shooters, we might be
4 missing certain elements of it in the comparative efforts,
5 of comparing them, let's say, to a workplace shooter or
6 postal workers from the eighties.

7 What I think was most interesting is that a
8 colleague of mine and a member of my dissertation committee
9 found that school shooters had a profound amount in common
10 with suicide terrorists around the world in that they had a
11 history of kind of social and professional failure and that
12 they were looking to die with a purpose. And so I think
13 that if we can kind of look at this across the board in
14 different ways, that we can help not only schools but also
15 workplaces and public areas to be safe in terms of
16 prevention. I think that would be the most helpful.

17 That's why I focus a lot on warning signs and
18 Extreme Risk Protection Orders, because those are things
19 that can address or can help all types of violence, not
20 just kind of isolated school shootings.

21 REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay. Thank you.

22 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
23 Tallman.

24 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 And Dr. David and Mark, you have been contrary to

1 all the testimony today, including what's in my select
2 committee report. And so if I reach out to you later, just
3 be prepared.

4 This is actually for Mr. Krug, and I'm going to
5 kind of piggyback on what Chairman Roebuck mentioned.

6 So the school building has to be designed to be
7 able to get students, staff, out in X number of minutes?

8 MR. KRUG: Correct.

9 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: What's that X number?

10 MR. KRUG: Oh; the capacity of each opening is
11 determined by the number of people that can get through it
12 in a certain period of time, and I can get back to you on
13 that. But it's a rapid, very rapid period of time.

14 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Do you think there's
15 actually a design criteria saying you should be able to---

16 MR. KRUG: Well, the building codes require that
17 each opening, each door opening, can handle a certain
18 amount of people at a certain flow rate. And so you
19 calculate the capacity of each opening based on the number
20 of people.

21 And stairs are the same way. Stairs and
22 hallways, the widths, are also determined that way.

23 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: So just thinking about
24 school districts I have visited, including the ones that my
25 children have been in, I now have grandchildren in, there

1 are multiple doors.

2 MR. KRUG: Yes.

3 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: And if you look at
4 security protocols, doors are considered areas to be
5 breached.

6 MR. KRUG: Correct.

7 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: So if I'm going to -- I
8 would have to be somewhat aggressive, but if I was going to
9 breach a school building, I would do it at the door. So
10 what are architects doing to make that much less likely to
11 have that door breached? A solid brick wall is one thing,
12 but a door is the opening in the brick wall.

13 MR. KRUG: Right.

14 Many exit ways that are only for emergency exit
15 are metal doors, typically. Those that are front doors,
16 they are a mixture of glass and metal because they are more
17 welcoming at the front entrance. However, those back doors
18 that are exit ways are typically, a lot of them are metal
19 doors.

20 REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
22 English.

23 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 For Dr. Daly, in a second. Any statistics on
25 accidental discharges? I heard a college earlier mention

1 some. If you have any information.

2 But before that, while you're thinking about
3 that, for the superintendent, I'm intrigued by the rocks.
4 I had not heard about that in a lot of readings, and do you
5 give them slingshots or are they not permitted?

6 DR. HELSEL: No. We have some people who have
7 some pretty good arms. They can chuck a rock pretty fast.

8 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: But no; I don't mean
9 that jokingly. I mean, sincerely, I hope, you know, every
10 teacher and everyone would, you know, whether it's hot
11 coffee or, you know, whatever tool you have to try to
12 suppress and take advantage of that.

13 But did you consider any other non-lethal
14 methods, such as rubber bullets or arming with rubber
15 bullets, so if we had an accidental discharge there wasn't
16 issues, or Tasers, or any other non-lethal methods that
17 your district went through in analyzing?

18 DR. HELSEL: As far as, obviously they have
19 pepper spray. There is limitations of what you can do with
20 Act 235 certification, you know, as far as armed and things
21 of that nature. You know, if you have Act 120
22 certification versus Act 235, you know; if you have
23 full-fledged police officer training. We looked at those
24 nonlethal, and we do have that our people are also manned
25 with pepper spray.

1 As far as with the rocks in the classrooms,
2 that's just for our students for the last, you know,
3 instead of like where we used to have them all huddle down
4 underneath desks, and, you know, we have learned from
5 Virginia Tech where the gentleman that went, that did it,
6 actually went to a shooting range a week before and
7 actually put the targets on the ground, because he knew
8 students were going to be hunkered down, laying down under
9 the desks and shot there.

10 So basically, the ALICE idea is that if you are
11 going to secure, then you get out of the way. But the idea
12 is, we have rocks. ALICE says anything. Some people have
13 had golf balls, but golf balls bounce around, and I was
14 afraid of collateral damage with our kids, so I thought the
15 rocks won't bounce.

16 So actually, it was pretty easy. We just had a
17 dump truck full; go over to a landscaper and get river
18 stone. And they're nice, they're smooth, and you can
19 really hurtle them pretty quickly, and hard.

20 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: And I commend your
21 practical thinking.

22 Dr. Daly, any accidental information?

23 DR. DALY: So my research didn't cover any
24 accidental shooting, but I also study other criminal
25 justice issues, so I would point to studies in which

1 police officers, highly trained police officers in active
2 situations, hit their target about 30 to 40 percent of the
3 time, and that's usually in an open-air situation.

4 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Okay.

5 And for our mathematics teacher, the training
6 that you went through in Ohio, what was the length of time
7 for, you said you went through it twice.

8 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

9 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: But what was the length
10 of time, and I'm just curious how many rounds and---

11 MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, it was 3 days, and it just
12 wasn't only shooting. There was a mindset component
13 talking about some of the same things that we were
14 discussing earlier about the mental state of the
15 perpetrator and also the teachers and what those things
16 would take. There is also an emergency medical portion of
17 the training as well. And then a lot is done on the
18 range.

19 There is also a method that is referred to as
20 "force-on-force training," and our military participates
21 with that, along with SWAT teams and so forth, and it is
22 essentially running through live scenarios with airsoft
23 guns or, you know, altered guns that shoot paintballs and
24 that sort of thing so that you can react in those
25 situations or be able to shoot in context.

1 And the amount of rounds that we shot over the
2 3 days was right around 1,000. And we, like I said, at the
3 end of the course, we had to shoot the same exact
4 qualification that the police officers do, but only had to
5 score at a higher hit rate than what they do in order to
6 get certified.

7 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Okay. Thank you.

8 I mean, my time in the Marine Corps, I fired
9 under many different situations. I have been to many of
10 those simulated trainings. I have observed my police
11 officers doing it, and many erroneous shots in their
12 training. I just have a definite concern when the scenario
13 you described, when you're trying to get the kids in from
14 the hallway, well, if you're going out into the hallway,
15 how are you correctly identifying the actual shooter---

16 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: ---and that's always a
18 concern.

19 MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, it is.

20 And, you know, that's something that we do go --
21 actually, we did that simulation in an actual school
22 building and set that up as such and, you know, had the
23 role players as students and so forth.

24 And basically in the training, you don't shoot
25 when there's a danger of hitting somebody else, and you

1 work on positioning yourself so that you could deliver
2 rounds to stop that person from a position where you
3 wouldn't endanger anybody else.

4 Obviously, nothing is ever going to be perfect,
5 particularly in a panic situation. But, you know, again,
6 you know, just sitting there not being able to do anything
7 to stop them, in my mind, is way worse than trying to
8 confront and stop that person.

9 And then again, that's not to even mention, you
10 know, some of the psychology we talked about. They want to
11 die in glory. They want to get a high body count, so to
12 speak. And they're going to avoid places where there's
13 going to be resistance, and that probably would be the most
14 useful, and it's hard to enumerate, but useful, you know,
15 benefit from having people there that are able to respond
16 immediately.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: I appreciate your
18 candor. It is certainly a tough balance that we all
19 undertake here.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
22 Grove.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you all. I really
24 appreciate you being here today.

25 Mr. -- Zilinskas? Did I get it?

1 MR. ZILINSKAS: That's it.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yes. I'm not good with
3 last names.

4 Representative Fee had a question: How long has
5 Ohio had armed teachers in that State?

6 MR. ZILINSKAS: They have been doing it for
7 5 years, and the organization that I went through the
8 training has trained over, as I mentioned, 1,300 faculty,
9 administrators and staff, that sort of thing.

10 And I know that they don't have exact numbers on
11 actually how many teachers in Ohio that do currently,
12 because there are other organizations that do the training.
13 But they have been doing that for 5 years.

14 I know some other States, the ladies mentioned
15 earlier, that have been doing it a lot longer than that. I
16 know Utah has been one since the nineties. They have had
17 some sort of provision to have people armed in high
18 schools.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Through your research and
20 looking into this and you yourself deciding to go through
21 this process, and I completely understand that magical
22 time frame between when police arrive, and that's why a lot
23 of people conceal carry personally, because police arrive
24 after something starts, and let's say they're luckily there
25 at the time of the occurrence.

1 School districts with armed teachers,
2 administrators, whatever, how many incidences have they
3 had, whether it was a school violence issue, whether it's
4 with a firearm, another method, or the difference between,
5 or what unfortunate incident -- I just was reading an
6 article about, unfortunately, a teacher who had a discharge
7 of a firearm in a school district.

8 MR. ZILINSKAS: Mm-hmm.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: What have you seen through
10 your research with both of those scenarios?

11 MR. ZILINSKAS: There haven't been any incidents
12 in Ohio that are like that.

13 Now, I know the thing in California, we don't
14 know all the facts about that. But, I mean, if you have
15 gone through proper training, you never, ever handle your
16 firearm in that type of situation. It just doesn't happen.
17 That firearm is in your holster, and you'll get that in
18 training. I mean, that's a cardinal -- you don't bring it
19 out, you don't touch it, unless there's going to be an
20 incident in which it's needed. So I'm not sure what
21 happened there.

22 Other provisions. You know, if you are an armed
23 teacher, you know, nobody knows who you are, you know,
24 other than the school administrators, and you carry
25 concealed in an approved, secure holster. So nobody is

1 going to know how many there are and who they are.

2 The other thing is, you avoid getting in
3 situations. Let's say there was a fight in the cafeteria,
4 you know, and everybody looks to me. I'm 6-4, 220 pounds.
5 You know, if somebody like me was an armed teacher, I
6 wouldn't even get near that fight, because again, you
7 wouldn't want to introduce the firearm in some situation
8 like that or have the potential.

9 So a lot of those things, you know, if you have
10 the proper training, you know, again, it's a tool just like
11 anything else. You have got to, you know, have certain
12 things you do and don't do with that particular tool.

13 And so as far as, again, over the last 5 years,
14 there has never been any incident whatsoever where, you
15 know, kids have tried to wrestle a firearm off the teacher
16 or a teacher has got upset and shot their kids. I mean, it
17 just doesn't happen.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: The bills in front of the
19 House, you mentioned Senator White's, Representative Dush's
20 bill. There's one in the House and one in the Senate.

21 Can you review them quickly with us? They're not
22 a mandate.

23 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: It's up to the locals.

25 MR. ZILINSKAS: Right.

1 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: What kind of training?
2 Does it specify any kind of training?

3 MR. ZILINSKAS: Right.

4 I mean, basically the Legislature, I guess when
5 you vote for this and the Governor would sign it, would
6 leave it up to the school district whether or not they
7 wanted to have a provision to arm their teachers. So it
8 would immediately then go to the school board, and really
9 pretty much the State would be out of it at that point,
10 unless there are some training requirements.

11 The school district on that part then, you have
12 to get the teachers, who would first volunteer. You know,
13 they wouldn't be required in any way, shape, or form.

14 Then after they volunteer, they would have to be
15 approved and not have a history of anything that would be
16 considered to be at risk if they would have a firearm in
17 any instance. And they probably shouldn't be teaching if
18 they were at risk.

19 The next thing that would happen is the teacher
20 would go and get the approved training and then demonstrate
21 competency, and then come back to that district and be
22 able, again, to respond in that situation.

23 So, yeah, I don't think it would be good to have
24 a mandate, again, because some school districts,
25 particularly city school districts, they already have their

1 own police forces in there with metal detectors and police
2 officers right in the building ready to respond. Other
3 school districts don't have that, don't have those
4 resources.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I know one concern from
6 law enforcement, talking with one of my chiefs, is upon
7 police entering a building, you know, and it has been
8 mentioned multiple times that their one sole job is to put
9 down the intruder.

10 You know, State Police had an active shooter
11 presentation at one of my senior centers. I was there.
12 And they basically said, don't expect us, when we're coming
13 in, if you are shot on the floor, to help you; you're on
14 your own. So, you know, they recommend triage, getting up
15 to date on emergency procedures, and those kinds of things.

16 But as an armed teacher, did your training help
17 alleviate any concern for police entering the building with
18 armed staff?

19 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

20 Communication is vital, and that goes into the
21 training of what to do after that incident ends and when
22 the police arrive and so forth. And a really good training
23 program and a preparation program would also involve local
24 law enforcement so that there would be communication, a way
25 to identify coming in. I mean, the police aren't going to

1 come in and just shoot anything that moves. That's part of
2 their training.

3 You mentioned they won't stop, and that's true,
4 they won't stop and help anybody medically, because the
5 main priority is to stop that person as soon as possible,
6 so.

7 But being able to have, the faculty and staff to
8 have, you know, similar force-on-force training and, you
9 know, have and practice the police officers arriving on
10 scene and how to behave and what to do with your firearm at
11 that point and, you know, reholster and so forth and
12 communicate with them, and with some of the newer
13 technologies out to be able to communicate with them, would
14 avoid that type of situation where a police officer would
15 maybe shoot the armed teacher, you know.

16 And the other thing, and I said to our school
17 resource officer, I would much rather take the risk of you
18 shooting me coming in on entry as opposed to somebody who I
19 know is trying to shoot me and our kids. I would much
20 rather take that risk as a teacher.

21 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

22 And maybe, Dr. Helsel, you can weigh in on this
23 one.

24 Insurance concerns with arming teachers. Has
25 there ever been a discussion about how the insurance side

1 of this would work, if your insurance carrier would
2 continue to insure them? And I don't know how it's done in
3 Ohio. I would assume those school districts still have
4 insurance.

5 DR. HELSEL: We never pursued that, obviously,
6 because we haven't been thinking about arming teachers.
7 But it was important with our insurance carriers and things
8 for liability to make sure you had the proper
9 certifications and the policies, you know, the board
10 policies that we had to research and go through our legal,
11 our solicitor's advice, and research regarding before
12 arming our other staff members.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you.

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

16 Representative Gillen.

17 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Dr. Helsel, over to your
18 left, over here.

19 DR. HELSEL: Thank you.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: You had mentioned in your
21 testimony some of the dual roles, maintenance and tech
22 support, in terms of arming personnel in the school.
23 What's the attitude of the rest of the staff, teachers, to
24 using those dual-role individuals? Are they comfortable
25 with that? I know you probably haven't taken a survey, but

1 you must be getting feedback on that.

2 DR. HELSEL: I haven't heard anything negative
3 regarding that. I think that they wear a badge. It's not
4 a concealed carry or anything of that nature, so they are
5 clearly visible as far as that.

6 I think that if they go -- because they also do
7 events, athletic events. They become part of the culture
8 there, so they accept it, they see it, and they recognize
9 it. So I haven't heard anything negative.

10 They are aware of what's going on, and the people
11 we look at, like I said before, we look for a particular
12 skillset. We're fortunate to have maintenance people with
13 armed service experience under their belts prior to this or
14 other skills that have afforded them the opportunity to
15 already have some initial training.

16 And, you know, obviously part of this
17 certification is also they have to go through a psych, pass
18 a psych evaluation, before they even start any training or
19 any weapons certification.

20 So I have not heard anything negative about it
21 from parents or staff members, personally.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

23 And one other brief question, and just a lighter
24 moment.

25 I was doing some landscaping not long ago, and it

1 happened to be river rocks, and my 4-year-old was assisting
2 me. And as you can imagine, her assistance included
3 throwing a river rock, which hit me. And so there is a
4 certain amount of stopping power, and I can imagine that a
5 large number of them coming at an individual, as a last
6 resort, may have some efficacy.

7 But in line with that, to avoid resistance by the
8 perpetrator, what do we keep close to our vests, and it
9 could be for any of our testifiers. Defense involves an
10 element of surprise, so are there things we don't want to
11 reveal about our defensive posture?

12 DR. HELSEL: Yes. We don't want to respond,
13 obviously, how we're going to respond immediately and
14 things of that nature. We chose to make it well known
15 about the river stone because we want, if it's an existing
16 student, to be aware that the chances are that they are
17 going to be stoned severely if they try to do anything.

18 So certain things with your plans. We have
19 different rallying points that we change from different
20 classrooms. And so obviously we don't like to advertise
21 all of our plans. Certain things we leak out because we
22 see that it is a potential deterrent.

23 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: And when you do your
24 training for the river-stone throwing, I would like to
25 observe that as a Member of the House Education Committee.

1 DR. HELSEL: Okay. We will.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: We'll take the
5 Committee on the road for that. How's that?

6 Representative Brown.

7 REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you again,
8 Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your testimony.

9 So I'm going to take you on a little bit of a
10 softer approach, just because you're here, and it's really
11 for Mark and for Dr. Helsel and based on Dr. Daly's
12 statistics on, you know, 25 percent of students having, or
13 shooters having a preexisting mental diagnosis, and then
14 the rest of what we heard mostly in the media is a lot of
15 social failures or some issues of that nature.

16 So I know one of the school districts in my
17 district has positions, paid positions, where they are
18 almost monitors, and they have their eyes set on social
19 situations a little. I think they do other things besides
20 that.

21 But my question is to you, since you are here --
22 I probably would have liked to have asked some of the
23 previous testifiers, too. But just because of what
24 Dr. Daly said with her stats, as a superintendent and as a
25 teacher, do you believe that there may be an opportunity

1 for volunteer types of positions in our school districts
2 for almost like a social director in a sense, but something
3 of a nature where, you know, there's someone kind of
4 getting a feel for students and seeing the social
5 interactions? Is there an opportunity there that you might
6 think would be helpful in some way?

7 And we have talked about senior citizens
8 volunteering and then, you know, rebates, small rebates on
9 property taxes or things like that. But just your feedback
10 on that nature.

11 DR. HELSEL: Volunteers are great. They can
12 certainly lend a hand, but it also depends on their
13 training. Also, confidentiality. If they're getting into
14 some deeply personal things with students and they're not
15 really an employee, I would be a little bit concerned with
16 confidentiality if they heard something through the
17 discussions of that nature.

18 I think the power is doing positive messages,
19 whether it's, you know, our school started the positive
20 behavior intervention system. We're trying to get them
21 early where we're building connections, rewarding having
22 every kid make connections. And I think that's where the
23 volunteers can help, through endeavors of that nature,
24 where you're doing things to reward and make every kid feel
25 a little bit more connected to school.

1 But as far as the identification and addressing
2 those types of issues, that would concern me through using
3 volunteers.

4 MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

5 I mean, I would like to think as teachers we
6 develop those relationships with students and have a really
7 good feel because we spend so much time with them, you
8 know, in our classes and so forth. We coach them in
9 different sports.

10 Just recently, I retired from football, but I
11 coached football for over, you know, 30 years. So, you
12 know, I think we have a lot of that, and we also have
13 people from the outside who volunteer coach and develop
14 relationships with those kids.

15 I know recently, you know, one of the things that
16 I have been, you know, looking at, and it's not just
17 firearms in school. I mean, I want school safety, and
18 there's a wide variety of different components that we have
19 already talked about, and one is there's a psychologist
20 from our guidance center who is going to come in and talk
21 to and address the kids about the importance of -- if
22 anything is going on in social media, the kids are going to
23 know, and they have to understand the importance of letting
24 the proper people know ahead of time.

25 Just recently, Uniontown Area School District

1 just stopped somebody before it started. That's the best
2 outcome, because, you know, everything, the plan was all
3 there, the weapons were all there, but yet they got word
4 and were able to go in and stop the kid before he started.
5 And, you know, the kid hopefully is getting the help that
6 he needs, and nobody got hurt in that situation.

7 But again, unfortunately, sometimes that breaks
8 down, and then that's, you know, that's the other
9 component. But, you know, we're working to do things like
10 that, and I think, you know, the volunteers do kind of
11 filter in, at least to our school district, mainly through
12 the coaching of other sports.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you. That
14 was our final question.

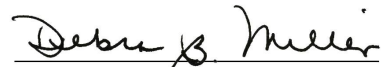
15 So I would like to thank the four of you for your
16 informative testimony today and bearing with us as we went
17 a little bit beyond our scheduled time.

18 Thanks to all the testifiers, all the Members who
19 spent time here today, and the members of the public who
20 joined us. I think we had a very informative hearing, and
21 with that, the hearing is adjourned.

22 Thank you very much.

23
24 (At 1:25 p.m., the public hearing adjourned.)

1 I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings
2 are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio
3 on the said proceedings and that this is a correct
4 transcript of the same.

5
6
7 

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