

## **Testimony Provided For Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Education Committee; School Safety Hearing, March 15, 2018**

Chairman Hickernell and Education Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to contribute written testimony to your committee regarding the safety and security of our schools throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I can think of no more critical endeavor at this juncture in time, particularly as the repercussions of the tragedy in Parkland, Florida continue to resonate throughout the country.

By way of introduction my name is Brian Krause. I live in Hershey and have been a Pennsylvania resident my entire life. I recently retired from the Pennsylvania State Police after 25 years of service, spent primarily in the Troop 'H' Harrisburg Criminal Investigation Unit, and the Domestic Security Division as a member of the Risk & Vulnerability Assessment Team (RVAT). As a member of PSP RVAT, I conducted over 100 Risk & Vulnerability Assessments of school buildings throughout the state. I also conducted many assessments of other government and commercial facilities, as well as stadiums, large events, infrastructure, etc. Today, however; my concern lies with schools, particularly with their vulnerabilities to criminal and terroristic activity both on the interior and exterior.

Briefly, a risk and vulnerability assessment is a comprehensive examination of a school's physical facilities and operational procedures. The assessment identifies critical assets, threat potentials, and vulnerabilities in relation to threat potentials. It focuses on many different areas of the school, including vehicle access, parking, access control, classrooms, closed circuit TV, lighting, mail handling, utilities, intrusion detection, communications, emergency preparedness, etc.

In conducting assessments at K-12 schools ranging from very rural to very urban, my primary observation is a distinct lack of consistency among security measures in place. Of course, this lack of consistency can be attributed to various factors, including financial, administrative priorities, school culture with regard to security, school board priorities, community opinions, the age of a school building itself, availability of personnel, etc. One must consider that at the time many school buildings in Pennsylvania were constructed, today's threats such as "active shooter" and similar terrorism tactics were not a consideration. Indeed, many school buildings that remain in use today were built from the 1950's – 1970's in the anticipation of large student population growth from the "baby boom" generation. Unfortunately, in today's society an "active shooter" situation is a very real threat to a K-12 school and thus, it is extremely important that school faculty and staff not only know how to react to such a situation, but are actively engaged in preventing the threat and/or mitigating the injuries and deaths if such a situation should occur.

I have found that a majority of schools in Pennsylvania have fairly current "all-hazards plans" in place that address various emergency situations from armed to intruder to extreme weather to fires. Many schools conduct lockdown and "active shooter" drills, either tabletop or full exercises. Select schools instruct their faculty and staff in techniques such as "A.L.I.C.E." or "Run, Hide, Fight" in order to deal with armed intruder situations. These efforts are very important and school districts

engaging in these types of training should be commended. Unfortunately, the area where many schools fall short is in preventive security measures.

Many schools throughout Pennsylvania fail to meet even the simplest and least expensive physical security recommendations. The numerous “active shooter” events throughout the country have taught us many lessons in school vulnerabilities, some of which are very simple to correct. The Sandy Hook Advisory Commission final report details physical security protocols that all schools should have in place; however, from my experience do not. Simple and common-sense items such as playgrounds protected from vehicle access, interior locking mechanisms on classroom doors, sequential numbering of entrances, and school-wide access to public address systems are missing at many schools throughout the Commonwealth.

To my knowledge, Pennsylvania has no mandatory requirements for physical security in schools. There are no certification requirements or minimum standards in place for schools in the area of physical security. In contrast, schools must adhere to fire codes and as a result, from my research I have found no student fatalities due to school fires within the last 50 years. We all know the same cannot be said about school violence incidents. Unfortunately, although not all student deaths can be prevented, deaths and injuries can be mitigated if schools are required to follow some simple standards. Simply locking the front door is not enough, as many intruders enter a school through a secondary entrance or, in the case of student offenders, are already inside the school. Fairly inexpensive measures should be immediately implemented, such as conspicuous signage, interior window shades on classroom doors, deadbolt locking mechanisms capable of being locked from within a classroom, thorough vetting of visitors, prohibitive backpack policies, etc.

In conjunction with improved physical security measures, the changing of school culture with regard to security is critical. To truly keep a school safe, all stakeholders must be active participants in the security of the school. Basic security protocols should be included in parent instructions and community gatherings. Parents should be advised that merely because the receptionist “knows them,” they are not exempt from visitor policies. Notorious vulnerabilities such as staff members propping open doors, students holding doors open for strangers, loading dock susceptibilities, and communication gaps must be stressed not only in security protocols, but with the staff, students, and school community at large to create an overall safer environment.

Unfortunately, as it stands today, in many cases only the “wealthiest” school districts throughout the Commonwealth are able to implement recommended security measures throughout their districts. Some districts are able to implement measures at their largest school, typically the high school; however, the remaining middle and elementary schools fall woefully short. State funding targeted specifically for K-12 security measures would certainly assist in ensuring safeguards at schools are implemented without regard to location or local resources.

Improving physical security at K-12 schools is vital to preventing and mitigating violent incidents; however, it truly is only a portion of the solution. Mental Health, anti-bullying efforts & education, anonymous suspicious activity reporting, parental involvement, and other measures are important components as well.

Regarding improvements to school physical security, my thought is to establish baseline, relatively simple and inexpensive standards for school physical security throughout Pennsylvania, enact legislation requiring that schools meet the standards, and earmark funding for implementation. The baseline measures would be established through a committee of experts, school personnel, and community members. Through my experience, I recommend the baseline school security measures as listed below.

Thank you for allowing me to provide information based on my knowledge and experience from assessing schools throughout the Commonwealth. Our children are our most important resource and deserve to learn in a nurturing and safe environment. I will certainly be glad to answer questions and provide information going forward as requested.

Regards,

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### **Recommendations For Baseline School Security Measures to Be Implemented Throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania**

1. All classroom doors and lockdown area doors should be equipped with locking mechanisms capable of being secured from inside the room. Locking mechanisms should be a sufficient distance from the door window and/or sidelight to prevent an intruder from reaching the lock from the hallway.
2. All classroom exterior and hallway windows should be equipped with blinds or coverings capable of being closed in the event of a lockdown emergency. Consideration should be given to the use of forced entry resistance glazing materials for windows and doors using laminated glass and/or polycarbonate to significantly improve forced entry delay time. A five (5) minute forced entry solution should be the design standard.
3. All schools should be equipped with a public-address system that operates through the school's telephone system. All school personnel should be able to access the system through an emergency code and be permitted to make school-wide emergency notifications in the event of an armed intruder or other applicable emergency situation. The public-address system must be clearly audible throughout the entire interior of the school, as well as on the exterior. Emergency tones and emergency (strobe) lighting are highly recommended.

4. Exterior playground and athletic areas should be separated from streets, driveways, and parking areas. Any of these areas situated adjacent to driveways and/or parking areas should be protected by fencing, vehicle impact bollards, or other substantial protective barriers capable of preventing a vehicle from striking students. Similar barriers should be utilized in bus loading/unloading areas where large groups of students congregate.
5. Silent panic/duress alarms should be installed in the main office or where public access is permitted. The alarms should be monitored by the county communications center (911), primary law enforcement agency, and a contracted alarm service.
6. All exterior doorways which provide ingress and/or egress to the school building should be numbered sequentially on the exterior in a clockwise manner beginning with the main entrance. The numbers should be clearly visible from the street or closest point of entry, contrast with its background, and be composed of a reflective material. Placement and size should be in accordance with PA Center For Safe Schools recommendations. Entrances should have corresponding numbers on the interior portion of the door. Door numbers should be annotated on floor plans provided to first responders.
7. Double looped handles on exterior and common area doors should be removed, replaced, or one handle should be removed to preclude the chaining of the doors to prevent emergency egress and/or ingress. Dated interior lever-style push-bar door releases should be replaced with flush push-bar door releases.
8. Trash receptacles and dumpsters should be positioned a safe distance from the building (a minimum of 30 feet). Exterior trash receptacles in areas where students congregate should be eliminated or moved inside the building.
9. Interior room numbers should be coordinated in a uniform numbering system format. Numbering should be in sequential order in a clockwise manner starting with the interior door closest to the main point of entry. Interior room number signage should be flag mounted so to be visible to first responders from a distance.
10. Main entrances should be equipped with a secure vestibule consisting of both interior and exterior doors that are lockable and controllable from a remote location. The vestibule design should force visitors to pass through a screening area prior to entering and leaving the school. The screening area should be an entrance vestibule, the administration/reception area, a lobby check-in station, an entry kiosk, or another type of controlled area. This controlled entrance should serve as the primary control point between the main entrance and all other areas of the school. Ideally, the screening area should be equipped with a greeter window, equipped with ballistic rated glass, natural voice speaker, and pass-through drawer.

11. "No Trespassing" and similar signage should be utilized at campus entry points to communicate clearly that only those with official business with the school are permitted on the campus, particularly during school hours. Similarly, all exterior doors should display signage advising visitors to proceed to the main entrance for authorized entry.
12. Substitute teachers should be issued a key to their classroom for the duration of their substitution period. Measures should be in place to ensure the return of the classroom key to administration.
13. Assigned and unassigned student lockers should be secured at all times.
14. Only authorized school personnel should be provided keys or access cards to make entry to the building. Contractors, food delivery personnel, etc. should never be issued keys to the school building.
15. Key administrators and alternate personnel should be trained on the location and procedures to shut down critical building systems in the event of an emergency. A critical building system shutdown quick reference guide should be available.
16. School employees should be trained in de-escalation techniques, mental health disorder strategies, and other applicable courses to assist in interacting with irate parents, students, visitors, etc.
17. Visitor policies should be developed and strictly followed/enforced by all school personnel. Several violent incidents have occurred in which school staff "personally knew" the offender and allowed them unescorted access to the school.
18. Evacuation assembly areas and routes should be observed for suspicious persons and/or items prior to the movement or assembling of students and employees.

"Short of transforming our schools into gated communities or prison-like environments, no school can be totally free of the risk of violence. Nevertheless, through improved safe school design and operation (SSDO) strategies, and through closer coordination with our educators, local law enforcement, fire departments, EMS, public safety personnel, security professionals and mental health experts, our schools can become much safer environments for students, faculty and staff. Moreover, we can significantly reduce the risk of violence occurring on school grounds without sacrificing our schools' core educational mission and community outreach programs. Accomplishing these goals can actually improve the educational eco-system and create safe school climates that allow students, teachers, and staff to flourish and excel."

**-Sandy Hook Advisory Commission**