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
dbmreporting@msn.com
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MATTHEW STEM</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPUTY SECRETARY, OFFICE OF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION, PA DEPARTMENT OF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR DOUGLAS BURIG</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF CRIMINAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INVESTIGATION, PENNSYLVANIA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE POLICE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEFF THOMAS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGENCY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHAEL FACCIETTO</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESIDENT, PA SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOARDS ASSOCIATION; SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOARD PRESIDENT, BETHLEHEM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOLORES MccCRACKEN</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESIDENT, PA STATE EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRENT KESSLER</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSBA BUSINESS MANAGER AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOARD SECRETARY, CENTRAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YORK SCHOOL DISTRICT; ON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEHALF OF PA ASSOCIATION OF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JONATHAN BAUER</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL, UPPER MERION AREA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL; BOARD OF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTORS, PA PRINCIPALS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARK DiROCCO, PH.D.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATORS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JENNIFER PALMER</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH ANALYST II, EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROGRAM, NATIONAL CONFERENCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OF STATE LEGISLATURES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUREN SISNEROS</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE RELATIONS STRATEGIST,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TESTIFIERS (continued):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. STEVENS KRUG, AIA, LEEDap, PE, AEE FELLOW PRINCIPAL, KRUG ARCHITECTS; ON BEHALF OF AIA PENNSYLVANIA......................152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARK ZILINSKAS MATHEMATICS TEACHER, INDIANA AREA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL....................157</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARAH E. DALY, PH.D. ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY, LAW, AND SOCIETY, ST. VINCENT COLLEGE.................................160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID H. HELSEL, PH.D. SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, BLUE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT........164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

See submitted written testimony and handouts online under “Show:” at:

http://www.legis.State.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/TR/Public/tr_finder_public_action.cfm?tr_doc_typ=T&billBody=&billTyp=&billNbr=&hearing_month=&hearing_day=&hearing_year=&NewCommittee=Education&subcommittee=&subject=&bill=&new_Title=&new_salutation=&new_first_name=&new_middle_name=&new_last_name=&new_suffix=&hearing_loc
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us this morning for this hearing of the House Education Committee. I would like to call the meeting to order.

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

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

Chairman Roebuck.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

My name is Craig Staats, and I represent the 145th District in Bucks County.
REPRESENTATIVE LEWIS: Good morning, everyone. My name is Harry Lewis. I’m the Representative from the 74th District in Chester County.

REPRESENTATIVE O’NEILL: Top of the morning to you all, and happy Saint Patrick’s Day early. My name is Bernie O’Neill -- O’Neill -- and I represent the 29th District in Bucks County.

REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Good morning, everyone. My name is Mike Reese. I represent the 59th Legislative District, which includes portions of both Westmoreland and Somerset Counties.

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

REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Good morning. I’m Representative Maureen Madden. I represent the 115th District in Monroe County.

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

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Good morning. Rosemary Brown, the 189th District, Monroe and Pike Counties.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Representative Tom Quigley from the 146th District in Montgomery County.
REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Good morning.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Good morning.

Hal English, Allegheny County.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCARTER: Good morning.

Steve McCarter, the 154th District in Montgomery County.

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

REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Good morning.

Mark Longietti. I represent the 7th District in Mercer County.

REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Good morning, everyone.

Gerry Mullery, the 119th District in Luzerne County.

REPRESENTATIVE WARREN: Good morning.

I’m Perry Warren. I represent the 31st District in Bucks County.

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you, Members. We have a great representation of Members today.
I know there are several Members who had other commitments this morning and they’ll be coming in late. I will try to recognize them as they come in.

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

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

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

I want to make it clear that this forum is not a day to discuss Second Amendment rights, and discussions around firearms should be limited to their role as it relates to school safety. I would note that in the weeks
ahead, the House Judiciary Committee will be holding a series of four hearings on public safety, gun laws, and violence.

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

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

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

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

At this time, I would recognize Chairman Roebuck
MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly want to thank those who are here today for this discussion of school safety. School safety, it seems to me, is a basic right that all students should be able to go to school in a safe environment and be able to take advantage of the opportunity to learn and not do that in fear.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you, Chairman.

Before I introduce our first panel, I would ask the panelists, I know you have spent a lot of time on your written testimony. You are certainly free to read that, if you would like. If you would like to summarize that, that normally goes over very well with our Members. It also gives Members an opportunity to ask more questions.
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.
And our agency performs many functions in support of teaching and learning in the Commonwealth, and paramount among them is ensuring the safety of the 1.74 million students that we serve.

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

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

At the Department, we support schools to create the conditions that allow them to provide safe schools for their students, including prevention efforts, response
planning, and recovery planning. But one of the themes
that you’ll notice in our written testimony is we really
want to underscore not only how important response planning
is as reflected in our emergency response plans the
districts create, but also how critically important
prevention is.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

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

My name is Major Douglas Burig. I am the Director of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation for the Pennsylvania State Police. We are committed to protecting all Pennsylvanians and have been actively engaged in a
variety of programs intended to counter the threat posed by active shooters and to improve response to critical incidents in our educational facilities.

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

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

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

One of our department’s priorities is to provide training to school district administrators and staff regarding the active shooter threat. And just in 2017 alone, between our community service officers and other PSP members, we conducted 364 active shooter presentations to thousands of attendees on this topic.
These presentations included recognition of warning signs that might be indicative of someone progressing towards violence and guidance about what actions to take if an active shooter enters their facility. Most of these presentations were given specifically to educators and school district administrators.

Another service that PSP offers is our Risk Vulnerability Assessment Teams, or RVAT. But RVAT consists of a team of Troopers who are specially trained and certified to provide on-site security assessments. RVAT members conduct an in-depth review of the entire facility, including access controls, camera coverage, and communication protocols, and in turn, they provide a very detailed report to the administrators containing recommendations to enhance their security posture.

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

Another critical component is the regular interaction of sharing of information between law enforcement and school district administrators. In the field, our stations conduct annual response drills and
tabletop exercises with schools in their respective coverage areas to prepare for any critical incident.

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

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

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

I’m Jeff Thomas. I’m the Executive Deputy Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. So we’re a fairly small agency with a pretty big mission. Our job is to coordinate the State agency response and help the counties and the local municipalities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies, whether they be man-made emergencies or natural disasters. Part of our requirements under Title 35 are to
provide planning tools for not only the counties but also the schools in Pennsylvania, and to accomplish this, we work with the 67 counties, we work with the 2,600 municipalities, and with the school districts.

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

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

How I would make the analogy of this program is, and I was talking to Major Burig before, so there’s an analogy to TurboTax. You have to do all of your work ahead of time. The big EO deal with planning is, you need the people in the room to talk about their threats. They identify their threats. They do all of that work ahead of time. Then the effort shouldn’t be in how you organize it into a document. That is not where your efforts should be. It should be in your planning.
So the planning templates provide an easy way to organize all of that information and make it available Web-based, not just to the school districts but to the first responders that may need that in times of an emergency. That is available to every school and every school district in Pennsylvania, including cyber schools and parochial schools. You can contact your intermediate unit, PEMA, or the Department of Education, and we can help anybody that needs help with that.

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

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you, gentlemen.

Questions from Members?

Chairman Roebuck.
MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: It seems to me that in part, the perception of what schools are has changed. Schools, as I remember and I think most of us remember, were always neutral turf. Whatever happened in the community did not penetrate into the school building. Now it seems as if the vision is erased, and things that start in the community ultimately end up influencing directly what happens in the school, and I wondered if you might just comment on that.

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

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

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

I can tell you that anecdotally, you know, notwithstanding some of the tragedies that have, you know, rocked the nation and communities in recent years, schools
do, for the most part, remain a safe haven, even in areas where we see high crime and violence. And I think anecdotally, the good news is that most of our students still do feel safe in their schools and feel that their schools are one of the safest places to be, and I do think there is data that plays some of that out.

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

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Quigley.
REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony today.

Major, I did have a question for you.

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

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

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

MAJOR BURIG: Certainly.

We cover 66 percent of the municipalities in Pennsylvania either full time or part time. So Troopers are spaced throughout the Commonwealth, and they don’t sit at the station and wait for a call to come in. There are out in patrol zones. They are geographically dispersed. And we also take a look at the data that comes in, the crime data, to deploy our people effectively, to be closer
to where the crimes are most likely to occur, including
violent crime.

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

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay. Thank you very
much.

MAJOR BURIG: Thank you, sir.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Miller.

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

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

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

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

I thank you guys, by the way. I hear nothing but good things regarding your department’s involvement in those. I appreciate it. Admittedly, I would say that it is still a tragedy how much time is spent and how much our children are exposed to that type of reality, but I appreciate your involvement in offering security help along that path.
My question, though, for you is that we clearly have a myriad of patchwork in the State of Pennsylvania regarding schools that have any one of those three types of officers, a combination of those three types of officers, or no officers across the board. Some of them are dependent upon school security officers more than others. Those tend to have, from what I understand, just Act 235 certification. Can you offer some insight into the need or value of more training for all three of those classes in relation to increasing the amount of firearm training, child psychology, mental health disability, traumatic training awareness into kids with disabilities, looking to create better communication. From what I even understand, these school security officers aren’t required to even have first aid or CPR or anything along those lines.

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

MAJOR BURIG: Thank you for those compliments about our agency and our involvement in school safety. Responding to an active shooter, it’s an incredibly complex and dynamic situation, and training is critically important to make sure that we’re going to be
successful to quickly interdict that threat and neutralize it to minimize the carnage inside the schools.

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

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

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

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

And listen, I am sure that everyone here, we would all agree that a mental health or a disability
diagnosis of any type, you’re more likely to be a victim of
something than a perpetrator, so I appreciate the example
that you brought up.

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

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

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

MAJOR BURIG: Right.

Well, certainly it would be a matter for this
body to decide what is mandated for people that are in
school, regardless of what your classification is --
security officer; sworn law enforcement officer.
And MPOETC, within MPOETC, the State Police oversee that, and we make sure that those training standards are effectively employed across everybody who has that certification, so.

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

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

Representative Brown, a question?

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

And I have to put a shout-out to Stroudsburg School District, which is one of my local school districts that yesterday did a “Who’s Your 17” type of program yesterday with the national effort around honoring the
victims, the 17 victims. But what they did was a
tremendous type of team-building activity inside the school
where they would speak to 17 kids maybe they didn’t know
and try to build relationships among their peers. They did
team-building activities to, you know, try to get the kids
to speak and communicate with each other. So I really
thought they did a great job.

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

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

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

A couple weeks ago, Secretary Rivera sent a
letter to all superintendents encouraging them to use this
opportunity to teach civil engagement, and it sounds like
that was a great way to turn a tragedy into a positive for
the students in that school.

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: That’s great. And I think
that hopefully as a legislative body and working with our
schools, I would like to definitely see more of that. I
think that is part of the prevention efforts that we talk
about.

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

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

And bullying at that time, students used to be
able to get away from bullying because, you know, if there
was someone that had a bullying interaction, you would get
that separation when school would end or when you go home. Nowadays what we’re seeing in schools is that bullying is following students wherever they go, because much of this takes place online.

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

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

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

There may be unique scenarios, though, where there are Federal protections for a student; for example, maybe a student with a disability who is engaged in a certain behavior that would, you know, would call on some of those protections. But we encourage students and families to cooperate and collaborate, and we see good things happen when everyone comes together.
REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Okay. And I may follow up with you on that a little bit more after.

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

Mr. Chairman, one last one?

One last one. He’s being good.

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

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

So, no, right now we don’t have a specific count on the number of metal detectors in schools. We do provide
grants for equipment through the Department as well as programs, and we know that some districts have utilized grant dollars to purchase metal detectors.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you.

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

And the reason for me putting that out was I believe it’s something that can truly help reduce the anxiety of the parents, the teachers, the children, when you have, you know, fifth graders extremely nervous; they
can’t focus. And I think it’s something we can do very
quickly to help our families, so.

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
Longietti.

REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Thank you all for your
testimony.

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

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

So we would be supportive of those efforts and
certainly would love the opportunity to provide additional
resources to schools, with the caveat in making sure that
it’s for SROs, SPOs, equipment, but also for programs and
preventative programs, that districts would have the
ability to leverage those funds in all of those ways.

REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Okay. Thank you.

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

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

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

MAJOR BURIG: Well, through many of the programs
that I have described, we’re regularly communicating with
the school districts. And the touchpoint at the local
level is our community services officers. They are the
ones that are conducting these drills with the schools,
evaluating their school security plans, and doing the
actual drills, whether it’s tabletop or it’s a functional
drill.
And as part of that, we avail all the State Police resources, whether it’s bringing the Troopers on site at the school while the children are arriving. Some schools have even been progressive enough to give us office space in their schools, particularly ones that are in further reaches of the county or less populated areas for the Troopers to do administrative duties. We have parked random vehicles in front of schools so that students know that the State Police are there. So there’s this constant communication, and they are certainly aware of the resources and what an RVAT assessment can do.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE LONGIETTI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Just to follow up to Mark’s question, Deputy Secretary.

About $7 million or so goes out in a typical year through the grant program. If you were able to fund, you
know, every application that came in, I mean, what would that dollar figure be? Do you have any idea?

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you very much.

Representative Grove.

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Good to see you.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you so much, gentlemen.

Major Burig, the first question.

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

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

MAJOR BURIG: We do, sir.
At our Academy, we have a, it’s not quite 360 degrees, but it’s live actors, film, that react to your verbal commands or the firing of a weapon that has a laser in it, and it can be used to simulate almost any scenario, including active shooters.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Excellent.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Excellent. Wonderful.

Thank you.

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

So kind of looking back at all the scenarios that have happened across the various different States, we had an incident in York County. Central School was closed for 3 days, and I know we’re going to hear testimony from them
later. But looking back, what weaknesses do we have on the prevention side, and what are your recommendations to address that moving forward?

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

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

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

If we have something that needs to go to all schools in Pennsylvania, we have a contact with the Department of Education that can disseminate it down through the districts, so.
REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

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

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: That’s good. So that’s probably on the criminal side.

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

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

And it’s one of the reasons why the trainings, for example, that we provide, we fund 29 individuals -- I’m sorry -- 27 individuals and 27 out of our 29 IUs to do trainings, and part of that is to “see something, say
something.” And so they try and train individuals in school settings to “see something, say something.” So that’s usually the biggest point of breakdown.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative McCarter.

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

And again, thank you all for your testimony today.

I know Representative Longietti mentioned a few of the things that I was concerned about and most concerned about in terms of the funding issue dealing with
the grants program, and I think we have touched upon that already.

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

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

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

Addressing the needs, obviously, you know, the security issue, is one way to try to stem that. However, it will never go away unless we deal with those underlying issues and the underlying issues of the weapons and obviously coming into schools. I know of Representative Brown and the idea of having metal detectors in every
school, but that creates another atmospheric issue for our schools and where we send our children to be educated.

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

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

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

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

So we believe it takes all efforts, including the appropriate staffing and resourcing to schools, as well as the response activities, to have a balanced approach.
REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: And just as a follow-up to that.

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Sure.

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

It’s a difficult, you know, it’s certainly a difficult challenge.

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

And that raises the issue, therefore, also in our urban environments where we have greater risks, that they would pour resources into one area where other districts and so forth would be able to pour their resources into other things, and that’s something we need to address also.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Gillen.

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

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

(Laughing.)

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Phillips-Hill.

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

Gentlemen, thank you so much for being here today.

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

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

With regard to the recent Central York School District incident that closed the school district for 3 days because of the threats, could you talk about how each of your different agencies were involved with that incident? Can you tell me what you learned, what the
takeaway was for each of your agencies from that incident? And based on what you learned, do you have any recommendations to help our school districts address these types of issues or concerns going forward?

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

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

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

So what it did underscore for us is to remind us to be sure that there are mechanisms by which schools can
engage in the resources that the Department provides, and as was mentioned before, our All-Hazards plans do talk about exactly what steps to walk through.

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

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

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

As was pointed out by the Committee, there were hundreds of incidents, both before that and they continue to this day. So what I have seen is I think others have
taken the lead from what was done in Central York and other
districts to try to address this ongoing threat. But it
was a very good collaborative effort between everyone
involved.

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

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

So we collect that information. We share it in
almost real-time with PaCIC and with the State Police and
with all of the other agencies, including Education. So
we’re getting a look across the whole State of, is this a
statewide issue? Is this a Central York issue? That’s our part in this.

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

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

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE PHILLIPS-HILL: Thank you very
much.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
Tallman.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

So my easy question to you, Matt, is, we have a
school, safe school advocate, and Mr. Thomas alluded to
Philadelphia County being pretty decent on some of this
stuff. And if I understand the committee report correctly, it’s only funded by you for, well, it’s Philadelphia, a county of the first class. Is that correct?

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Okay.

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

Now, we have Mr. Healey here who is very familiar
with Bermudian. So Bermudian is a very concise campus. Three buildings are right there. That’s one version. And then we have Upper Adams, which has buildings -- I’m not saying it’s bad, but they have buildings scattered all over the school district. Not connected, and, I mean, they’re separated by miles.

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

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

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

With that in mind, we have done hundreds and hundreds of school assessments since the inception of the
program in the mid-2000s, and in a lot of districts what we’ll do is let the superintendent pick the school. And what we find is, a lot of the deficiencies you’ll find in all the schools within that district. Some common things: inadequate lighting; lack of CCTV coverage where they can see who is admitted into the building. Then we provide them with a complete list of industry best practices, other schools’ best practices, that can be applied to their other schools.

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

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

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

I couldn’t tell you what it would take. Assessments typically take -- it depends on the size of the school -- 1 to 2 days, and sometimes it can take more than one member. So all of that would have to be taken into consideration.
But again, often we find a lot of the same deficiencies at school after school.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

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

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

But like an airplane, you know, I’m really not planning or thinking about, you know, what the crash team is there at the runway. I want to make sure that we’ve got
maintenance on the aircraft, good communications, weather
predictions and forecasts, and that’s resources. That’s
where we need to look at committing that to let the local
school districts make their decisions for their areas.

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Yeah.

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: We would say that, so
safety isn’t specifically a K-to-12 issue. I mean, I’m the Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary. That’s the lens through which I see the world. But certainly this is a pre-K to postsecondary, and we’re all, you know, aware of the incidents that have happened at institutes of higher education in recent years. They have also increased.

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

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

MAJOR BURIG: If law enforcement is involved with an individual in the school setting, the law allows us to retain certain records related to those interactions, and, of course, the Criminal History Record Information Act where we can see juvenile arrests, even though employers may not.
So when we conduct additional investigations that might involve that individual, we try to look holistically. We look at the entire person’s background and the facts that are presented to us. So those early interactions may be part of a record within the bounds that we’re legally allowed to keep them.

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

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

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

Again, not a scientific answer.

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

DEPUTY SECRETARY STEM: Thank you.

MAJOR BURIG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY DIRECTOR THOMAS: Thank you.

PANEL II:

VIEWS OF

Pennsylvania Education Organizations

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

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

I’ll let you begin in a minute, but just by way of introductions, we have Michael Faccinetto with the Pennsylvania School Boards Association; Dolores McCracken with the Pennsylvania State Education Association; Jonathan Bauer with the Pennsylvania Principals
Association; Dr. Mark DiRocco with the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators; and Brent Kessler with the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials.

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

MR. FACCINETTO: Yep.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PSBA assists school districts in complying with laws and regulations associated with emergency preparedness and effective relations with local law enforcement officials. The Association and its members’ policies and administrative regulations that address necessary proactive and reactive issues and procedures related to various 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,
some of which will require action from the General
Assembly. PSBA wants to emphasize that it has not taken a
position on gun control and that its solutions focus
strictly on school-based safety.

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

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

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

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

Bethlehem is a large school district with two
very large high schools, Liberty and Freedom. Liberty High
School has approximately 3,000 students, all of which who
enter the building each day within 15 minutes. A school
like this would require multiple metal detectors and an
equal number of X-ray machines for bags, not to mention
trained and certified staff to operate each piece of
equipment.
Schools are not Federal buildings and they are not State Capitols that have 24/7 security in place. Schools are the hub of the community that open their doors to a wide variety of groups. If a school were to install this type of equipment, it would have to be used all the time. The sheer amount of afterschool and weekend activities would make this not only extremely expensive but nearly impossible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Districts need legislation that complies with current timelines of health screenings, is not burdensome to school administration, but is effective in encouraging screening of students. Screenings could assist school
faculty and staff in working proactively with our
students.

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

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

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

Districts need access to the most advanced school
security plans and emergency response models, as well as
training on the implementation of such plans. We ask the
General Assembly to direct PDE, PEMA, and other State
entities to provide security plans, models, conflict
diffusion training, and other technical assistance to
elevate and update their plans to school districts so they
may continue to benefit from these resources.

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

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

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

I want to emphasize again that there is no
one-size-fits-all approach that will work for all school
districts and that we need flexible options and the
resources to implement them. We look forward to working
with you throughout this process.

Thank you.

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

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

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

But just think what it means that millions of
educators wake up every morning wondering what would they
do if they were put in the position Scott Beigel was placed
in and worrying about their students, their families, and
themselves as they kiss their own families goodbye.
It’s a horrific new reality. I’m tired of just worrying. I’m tired of just being anxious. I’m ready for clear and decisive action.

This time must be different.

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

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

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

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

Increase appropriations for school safety grants that can be used to provide funding for physical improvements like secure entrances, panic buttons, door jammers, even streaming video shared directly with the local law enforcement station, active shooter training programs, and school resource officers.
Addressing the physical safety of school buildings was one of the most common responses we received. I would ask that you please work with your fellow lawmakers and Governor Wolf to secure additional funding for Pennsylvania Safe Schools Grants in the final fiscal year '18-19 budget and ensure more regular school safety audits.

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

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

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

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

However, if we are to genuinely engage in a constructive dialogue around the necessary actions to be taken to prevent the next Parkland, then we must recognize
and acknowledge the truth of what is happening in our
schools today.

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

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

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

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

PSEA is working with the superintendent,
principal, and school board associations. Last week, our
organizations offered webinars for our members on threat
assessments because we believe they are critical to keeping
students safe. We will continue to work with these groups
on this issue, and I hope you will help us bring these
teams to every district in the Commonwealth.

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

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

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

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

Pennsylvania is a diverse State. Tioga and
Philadelphia Counties are very different places, and a
one-size-fits-all solution is simply impractical in the
school safety context. As you consider ideas to make our
schools safe, it is my hope you will allow flexibility and
local autonomy in order to enable locally elected
officials, parents, and schools to determine how to best
use the resources available to them.

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

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

But we at PSEA are a “small d” democratic organization and have a process to consider legislation. In this case, our legislative committee, board of directors, and our statewide team of officers, all elected by our colleagues, had a chance to consider Senate Bill 383 and unanimously voted to oppose the legislation. We did so after considering the input from first responders; from those involved in prior school shootings, including letters from the survivors of Sandy Hook; and from our 181,000
members, the majority of whom do not support the arming of teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

I know it is challenging to find consensus and to find the resources needed to implement these ideas. Still,
I believe the proposals I have shared with you today -- investing in school safety grants, providing more support for mental and emotional health, creating crisis teams designed to predict and prevent violence, protecting Federal funding, and allowing localized planning -- can and will achieve bipartisan support.

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

Let us not look back and regret.
Let us not wait for it to be our turn before we act when we could act now.

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

Thank you.

MR. KESSLER: Good morning.

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

I am a proud father of three, an 8-year-old, a 6-year-old, and a 3-year-old. We live in Central York School District. Two are in one of our elementary schools.
My wife is a special education teacher at Columbia Borough School District in Lancaster County. So very near and dear, obviously, not just being the numbers guy and the CFO. So this is a very sensitive topic to me as well.

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

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

So hopefully each of you received my written testimony submitted earlier in the week, several pages long. A lot of good details in there. I’m going to summarize some of the points as far as the costs and the hardware, staff, personnel, a lot of the research that we have done. And so I won’t read the whole thing, and I have a couple of bullet points to touch on.
And just to take a few minutes to walk through what Central York has done. Obviously, we heard earlier today, as many of you are aware, credible threats closed our school for three school days. It actually started on a Tuesday afternoon and was not resolved until a Sunday night, late at night. So it was almost a week long. We did miss 3 days of school.

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

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

So we are fortunate to be a neighbor to York City School District, the School District of the City of York. They have metal detectors at their high school. They have had them for several years. They have been a good partner with us. We went and visited them about 2 weeks ago, spent
a little time at their high school, seeing their intake. They have three different entrances. They have two units at each entrance. And just wanted to study that to see, again, at a local decision, how would it work for Central York if that’s an avenue our school board chooses to go down.

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

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

Obviously, the next big thing was the police, whether you hire your own internal school district police,
whether you contract out with SROs, or down to just your regular event and security staff. And so the gentleman earlier had talked about the three different levels of school security that are employed right now.

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

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

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

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

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

A couple other questions. Obviously, it led to, mental health was touched on here. We currently contract
with T.W. Ponessa in York County, K through 12, to provide mental health counseling to our families and students in need. They come into our building, and I won’t go into the details because I’m not the educational person. The superintendents and principals can handle that. But we have an agreement with them.

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

And then we took the opportunity to look at all of our entrance points to all of our buildings: bus drop-off and pickup for the student side, the school bus side, but then the parent drop-off and pickup, and so where parents are pulling up, the traffic patterns, the flows. Was it adequate, was it efficient, or that’s just the way it has always been. So it gave us a great opportunity to look at that. What staff, what support staff, what administration is out every day welcoming the students and parents as they’re dropping their loved ones off.
We got down to, we have a fitness center and a swimming pool at our high school that from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. is open to the community. Okay; other than a lifeguard maybe standing there, those doors were open, and that gave us an opportunity to look at that and see, do we need additional security at those times; do we have to have sign-in procedures. And so we were able to grow in a couple of areas. Again, back to that risk assessment: how can we make sure that we are safe in what we’re doing.

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

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

To finish up, from a PASBO perspective, from the business operations’ and the school operations’ standpoint, we did previously this year, under one of our legislative
priorities, adopt a school safety initiative. I’m just going to read it real quick:

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

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

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

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

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

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

In my career, these efforts have included:

- Countless interactions with local police to discuss and analyze possible threats against the school.
- Participation in “safe school” committees that include district personnel and community first responders.
- In-service trainings run by countywide safety personnel on armed intruder responses such as “Run-Hide-Fight.”
• Tabletop exercises for administrative teams, designed to practice decisionmaking and armed-intruder scenarios.

• The installation of two “panic” buttons in my school as part of a countywide program for all schools, which can immediately connect with 911 emergency dispatch and police in the case of an emergency.

• Security audits done by outside security experts to provide guidance on how district and school safety can be made stronger.

• Collaboration with other local school administrators about their security protocols and conversation about what we can learn from each other’s experiences.

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

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

The next morning, we held a brief faculty meeting
to let staff know that we were working closely with police in regard to a threat, and we shared a picture of the former student. As school began, a teacher identified that the former student was indeed in our building, and we went into immediate lockdown.

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

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

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

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

Our safety protocols for lockdown were key in making sure our students and staff knew what to do in a
lockdown scenario. Drills are important.

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

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

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

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

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

   Guns as a safety measure in schools are best handled by trained security personnel or law enforcement.
Teachers and administrators have been trained to teach and lead, not to engage in gun battle. Even with training, we cannot expect that educators would be available and able to react in a crisis situation at the same level as a highly trained officer.

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

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

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

Finally, bringing a greater level of discussion and collaboration to the many issues that surround school
safety and the lessons learned from the tragic events of past school shootings can only aid in making our schools safer. School administrators, community leaders, and Legislators should be committed to maintaining an open dialogue, not only when tragic events occur but on an ongoing basis as well so that we are always at the ready.

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

DR. DiROCCO: Good morning, everyone.

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

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

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

But we also want to make a comment on that today,
that perhaps that’s one of the issues that we have to tackle here in that we can’t have 26 disjointed bills when it comes to school safety. We need to collaborate and work together with both chambers and the Governor’s Office to make sure that everybody is on the same page and that we have a coordinated, sustained effort on school safety as we move forward so we can put together coordinated legislation, omnibus bills, just to make sure that all of our schools are safe.

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

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

So that’s an issue that I know is difficult to approach and to take care of, but it’s something we’re going to have to do on behalf of our kids.
Once those safety audits are done, that’s when every district really needs to sit down and make sure they have an updated safety plan in place. You heard Deputy Secretary Stem talk about the All-Hazards planning. PDE does have the Office of Safe Schools, and they can come into your school district and work jointly with the school district leaders, with first responders, with local law enforcement, the fire department, and everyone else to put together adequate and very thorough plans so when crises do occur, people know what to do and how to operationalize those plans.

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

The physical structures. I know the whole PlanCon issue is still up for debate and we’re still waiting on the final report to come out about PlanCon, but school districts are going to need more money to make sure that their entry points are safe; that their buildings are up to new safety codes, new safety procedures; that there is only one point of entry; that there is a safe, secure vestibule when people come in and out of the building during the day, and that can cost considerable dollars.
Many districts have already spent thousands if not millions of dollars, you know, taking care of their infrastructure, reorganizing their infrastructure, doing renovations, and so forth.

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

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

The issue was brought up about more counselors and social workers. That is a crying need. You can go to
any school superintendent, any school building principal, walk in and talk to any teacher, and they are all going to tell you that kids are coming to school today with more issues and problems and concerns than ever before.

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

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

You know, most school shootings are not random acts. If you look at the reports by the FBI, the Secret Service, and the U.S. Department of Education, almost all of them are planned. Almost every one of these young people who end up coming in to shoot in school, they were either bullied at school, they were mistreated at home, or just mistreated all the way around. And almost every one of them believe that no one was there to help them, and that’s why it’s so important to have caring adults in schools who can develop relationships with kids.
But once a person, a young person or whoever is going to be the attacker, develops that violence plan, the clock is ticking, because then the next big key is, do they have access to firearms? If they have access to firearms, then you can almost rest assured that they're going to try to carry out their violent plan.

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

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

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

“No matter what bills are finally approved by the
legislature and signed into law by the governor to improve safety, school districts must have the flexibility, resources and funding necessary for the sole purpose of school security. We do not accept the notion that existing school district or state funds can simply be reallocated to the level necessary to appropriately fund the needed safety improvements for our children and educational staff members. Only with additional funds will our schools continue to have the resources they need to fulfill their mission of providing strong academic programs and services to prepare students for their future. Pennsylvania” recently “ranked 8th of the fifty States in the 2018 Education Week Quality Counts Report, which provides a state-by-state assessment of public education. Now is not the time to put our upward trajectory at risk. We can and must address both the mission of public schools and the safety of those who study and work in them with the resources adequate to meet both goals.”

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

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

Before I open it up to questions, I would like to recognize Representative Mindy Fee, who has joined us. Thank you, Mindy.
Representative Miller.

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

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

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

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

I think the ideals or the difficulties in that are going to have to be worked out as to who is paying for it, is it going to be part of the parents’, you know, health insurance plan, or how that’s all going to work out. But certainly any time we can get kids help earlier in the
process and identifying the needs that they have along those lines, we think that would be a positive.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: I appreciate it.

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

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

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

Just so I understand, when you are saying “counselor,” can you just give a little, a quick little definition as to what you are referring to?

DR. DiROCCO: Well, I think we need both, more guidance counselors just so they have a closer relationship with the kids that they’re assigned to, so 1 for every 250 instead of 1 for every 400 or 500. You just can develop better relationships, get to know those kids better. And
then those guidance counselors can make referrals to the appropriate mental health agencies, to the parents and so forth, when they are seeing signs in those kids.

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

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Okay.

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

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Tallman.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

School Board President, in this committee report, I’m not going to -- there were several lapses in reporting,
and I note the doctor here doesn’t want to see any more, but there are school boards where, you know, they didn’t report several areas in this committee report. But my question is specifically for the business manager from Central York, Brent.

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

REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Any time.

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

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

MR. KESSLER: Certainly.

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

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Okay.

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

REPRESENTATIVE HILL-EVANS: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.
MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative McCarter.

REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

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

At the same time, the things that we’re talking about today in terms of safety are going to be redesigning our buildings, potentially, in ways in which, again, I’m not sure they are always the educationally best way we want to deal with things such as, obviously, trying to get people all through one entrance with metal detectors would be a very difficult thing educationally. That’s one area I would like you to comment on in terms of the nature of the PlanCon issue there.
The second thing is, in terms of guns in schools, you know, so often we hear -- and I think all of you have taken a position that you don’t favor that. Is that correct? Okay.

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

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

MS. McCracken: As I mentioned, PSEA has a position of not allowing our school personnel to be law enforcement officers. We are not opposed to the hiring of school resource officers, trained security personnel,
working with the police departments around the State to
provide that security in our schools.

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

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

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

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

And to address the PlanCon issue, I think the
main resources that PlanCon could help with is outfitting
the secure vestibules. A lot of buildings do not have a
double-glass-door entrance where you just get buzzed in.
Updating cameras to more high-tech, high-definition cameras for the secretary who maybe buzzes the front door open to have a visual on the person. Adding more card access to the back entrances of the buildings where teachers may come and go in the morning from the staff parking lot instead of just having that one main entrance with a card access.

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

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

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

So we would just like to see those decisions to be local, be individual, and have a voice from the principal in those.
MR. KESSLER: Obviously, PASBO supports the PlanCon initiative and would just simply ask for additional funding or continue to fund PlanCon so the opportunities to update schools’ security systems, et cetera, vestibules, can be continued. So we would support PlanCon.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE McCARTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Staats.

REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

I think you have all expressed concerns with metal detectors, and I have three school districts back home in Bucks County, -- Palisades, Quakertown, and Pennridge -- and at least one is using captured vestibules,
it seems with some degree of success.

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

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

   REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Correct.

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

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

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

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

   One other question, if I could, regarding the
Student Assistance Program. We know it’s designed to
identify and intervene with students with drug and alcohol
problems and mental illness problems. So I’m curious, has it been successful; and two, is there a mechanism in the process that would remove the student from the school and get them evaluated and/or help for their addictions or mental illness?

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

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

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

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

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

MR. BAUER: There can be, depending on --

depending on the situation, if there’s a threat or not.

But we do have cases where we do require that a student

sees a mental health professional and gets the letter

deeming that they’re not a risk to themselves or others

before they continue with their school day.

REPRESENTATIVE STAATS: Okay. Thank you, panel.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative

Mullery.

REPRESENTATIVE MULLERY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank all five of these speakers

for testifying to how important restarting the PlanCon

program is.

I know in my legislative district and in many

places throughout the Commonwealth, our schools were

constructed to be almost de facto civic halls. Like our

previous speaker spoke, it’s where the Boy Scout meetings

occur. It’s where the town musicals occur. It’s where

several of the civic meetings occur. Our schools were

built to welcome people in, and now we’re finding ourselves

in a position where we’re trying to keep people out.

So without PlanCon, it’s something that we just

keep putting ourselves behind the eight-ball. So I truly
appreciate your testimony in that regard.

I have two questions for Dolores.

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

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

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

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

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

Representative Mullery: Thank you.

As I made my way around to my five school
districts in the wake of what occurred in Parkland, the one caveat or exemption that people felt more comfortable with, even those who didn’t want to see teachers armed or school personnel armed, was if it were a veteran or if it was, you know, ex-military. Do you have any subset of statistics from either your survey or those national surveys regarding that as a potential solution?

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

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

Representative Mullery: Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Majority Chairman Hickernell: Representative Quigley.

Representative Quigley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank all of you for your testimony on this issue.
I had a question. I guess it was particularly directed at Mr. Bauer and Dr. DiRocco.

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

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

And I know it’s a broad topic, but it just, you know, it puzzles me when I talk to constituents, and, you know, we just went through a period where we were out gathering signatures to get on the ballot for our next term and, in light of this recent shooting, talking to people, particularly senior citizens. You know, they’re just baffled, too, as to what is going on with our younger people. And if you could just share some of your observations.
And again, I know it’s just an opinion, but I would be interested to hear what you have to say.

DR. DiROCCO: Yeah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

And so that’s why, once again, just getting back to that concept that we need more caring adults in the schools who can develop positive relationships with kids and help them through all these issues that they’re dealing with, whether it’s, you know, the economic issues they’re seeing their parents struggle with or the social media
issues that they and their friends are dealing with, I
think all that plays into it.

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

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

Talking about weekends, so that’s what I spent
like most of my day Sunday on. So it’s not that it’s
theoretical; it happens regularly. So on a regular basis,
we’re dealing with -- again, we’re glad that students are
comfortable identifying what they may deem to be a possible
threat or an incident of bullying. And then that’s
something that is followed up on, again -- and just a
recent experience I had this last Sunday -- by a teacher,
several administrators in my school, including myself, our
security director, and the superintendent and local police.

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

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Just a quick follow-up.

Do you find in your experience in these issues of
bullying where you get the parents involved, and again, I
hate to date myself, but I just think back to when, you
know, my parents were approached and my friends’ parents
were approached by school officials. You know, there were
consequences to me or to my friends, you know, from the
parents taking the word of the school official to say, what
are you doing in school; you know, why are you behaving
like this; why, you know, am I being called about this. Do
you find now, is that the same attitude, or is there a
different attitude of, you know, for lack of a better term,
overly defending the child as opposed to perhaps taking
more to heart what the comments are from the school
officials?
MR. BAUER: In my experience, I find parents to be fantastic partners. It’s usually just a communication issue.

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

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Phillips-Hill.

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

Thank you very much for your testimony.

Having served as a school board director, again, in the aftermath of Sandy Hook, we made many of those structural upgrades to our buildings without PlanCon money, and so I am painfully aware of the costs that are associated with those upgrades as well as the financial challenges that our school districts and our local property-tax payers face.
Many mandates pull money directly out of the classroom into efforts that don’t improve the educational quality of our children nor the safety of our children, our staff, and our communities. I have legislation that would reinstate the mandate waivers that school districts had under the Rendell Administration.

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

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

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

There are certain things that I know right off the top of my head would save us a tremendous amount of money. Some of them are controversial, some of them are not. But your input and your perspective on what mandates
we could waive and the potential savings to those mandate waivers would be very much appreciated.

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

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Brown.

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

And actually, right on the heels of Representative Phillips-Hill, the discussion of the waivers and possibilities of savings for you at the school district I think is very important, because one of the concerns that I had during one of the testimonies was the fact that the statement was made that we cannot reallocate any funds towards security measures. And that concerns me, because the fact of the matter is, as was said, we’re on tight financial restraints here and as well as you are at the local level.
But I believe that oftentimes the reallocation and the priorities of how we spend our money is a conversation that has to happen as well. And sometimes, you know, it’s the educational piece or it’s the safety piece, but if the kids are not safe, they can’t learn, and that’s a very important piece.

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

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

The other concern that I have is that oftentimes we may use local control as an excuse not to get something significantly done that would make a difference, and when we struggle with making sure local control is given and decisions are given and the people of Pennsylvania in our districts want something significantly done to make a difference for safety, we are pressured very strongly to make that happen. And that’s one reason that we’re looking and I’m looking for ways to fund this for the local districts.
So with funding being allocated, and on top of, I know, officers or people to man the entrances -- and then I’m going to ask one more question in regards to the backlog with the York District -- would there be, your feelings, on new money that is allocated from our State budget every year, and this year, right now, the proposal is 100 million, but new money that is allocated to the school districts being utilized first to fulfill safety measures before utilizing it for anything else. What are your thoughts on that?

MR. FACCINETTO: Sure.

I think, first of all, the conversation of reallocating dollars occurs every year in school districts when they start their budget process in late December, early January, and work to a final approved budget in the end of June. So as budget dollars are limited and the conversation of can we raise property taxes any more, how much can the citizens tolerate, the conversation is always, how do we move money around? What can we cut to fund this or fund that program? And certainly in the past month alone, there has been a lot of discussion around, how do we reallocate some of our own funds to upgrade security measures that maybe had been on the list to do for 5, 6, 8 years. In our own district every year in November, we
talk about what summer projects are up for next year, and we have this growing list that is somewhere in the neighborhood of $200 million in Bethlehem -- now, we have 22 buildings -- of things that need to be done. Some things are simple, like replacing lights with LEDs. Well, that’s great, but is that really going to affect the education? No.

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

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

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

If you’re a smaller district that has one campus with three buildings that are all connected and have up-to-date security features, then I think spending money on something that isn’t needed just to say we spent money on security wouldn’t be the best use of the dollars. But
certainly in districts like mine and others that have some
aging facilities, we would welcome new money to spend on
updated security.

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

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

    So certainly the conversations are there, whether
it’s mandate relief, whether it’s new money from the
General Assembly and the Governor. Security is going to be
top of the list this year, I think, in a lot of districts.

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

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

So, you know, consequently, there aren’t a lot of
new dollars to be putting into school safety. Even if
schools would choose to use those dollars for school
safety, they’re going to see an immediate loss right away.
I think we all know that, you know, the pension system over the last 7 years, 8 years, has increased by over $4 billion, a combined effort by the State and the local districts. So that’s $4 billion that, you know, is not going back to the classroom.

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

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you.

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

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

And New York, there were several teachers that are retired that came to me and said, you know, we’ve had metal detectors for years in New York, Rosemary, and they worked very well, and these are urban districts with a very large amount of students. So whether they had three
entrances or four entrances, you know, all those details would have to be pulled.

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

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

MR. KESSLER: Yeah.

Again, York City had a wonderful process. They have been doing it for several years. They gave us a lot of great feedback. Again, they would be ones that could provide additional information directly to their district.
But we had a great opportunity to see the process. They gave us a lot of feedback of what we could do; how we could make it faster, more efficient. But again, within 20 minutes, 25 minutes, the majority of them were all in until those last couple of stragglers come through.

So we have the fishbowl, the secure vestibules at all of our buildings as well, so how would it look? We talked through setup, we talked through entrance points, to be as efficient as we could. And so it was a great opportunity. They do a wonderful job. It's very seamless. They do, again, to hear directly from them, but they obviously said it has helped them over the years. They felt very good about having them in place at their high school. So they had great feedback for us, and again, it was a wonderful experience.

I can’t answer personally. You know, walking away from there, you know, Central York School District is a suburban school district. We have diversity across the board. We go from, you know, 40 percent free and reduced to million-dollar homes, and so we have it all. So I don’t know what it would look like for Central York to have that. As a parent, I don’t know what it would mean for our elementary school, for my kids to have to go through a metal detector every day. I don’t know -- personally, I
don’t know if that would give me a sense of ease or if it would make me feel like they’re going to prison for the day and, you know, worrying about, you know, is that a need.

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

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative English.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, panel.

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

I don’t know the term of art, but I’ll say a troubled youth or a youth of concern. I’m sure each school
has so many proportionally. Do you have an idea of what
that percentage is or what that historically has been, and
then where does it hit the danger zone? Because it just
seems like with all the mounting pressures and life
troubles and bullying, the number of those students is
going up as far as teaching and administration and being
principals and the school board.

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

Anyone?

DR. DiROCCO: Well, I’ll just talk from my
experience.

My district was about 2,000 kids, just a little
less than 2,000 kids, and I would say in any given year we
probably, across the district, had 10 to 20 students that
we were very concerned about, so approximately a half a
percent to 1 percent of the population.
They had extreme behavioral issues, extreme concerns on our part. We would often, you know, get them referrals to mental health agencies or, you know, the appropriate counseling agencies, whatever; work with the parents to try to get them the help they needed.

Oftentimes these students would end up with an emotional categorization for IEP and perhaps even be placed in a program outside of the district for extreme behavioral concerns.

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Anyone else? Thank you.

MR. BAUER: Those aren’t percentages that we necessarily, that I necessarily track in terms of my school and how many at-risk kids I have at any one given moment.
But I think one data point that we could look at is the number of kids that do go through the SAP programming in our school and schools across the State. That’s something that we do report out at the end of every year, and probably those numbers could tell us something about the number of kids that require those kinds of services now as compared to maybe in the past.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Madden.

REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your testimony.

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

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

Because I know as it stands in my neighborhood, there are children in the dark waiting for the school bus. I mean, how much sooner would they need to go to school?
When would they get out? How would this, you know, affect their day?

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

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

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

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Grove.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you all. I appreciate it.
Brent, you’re the finance guru on this thing, so I want to focus on you. Congratulations.

MR. KESSLER: Sure.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Let’s talk about grants versus ongoing costs.

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

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

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

So grant money would buy the hardware, outfit everything, the supplies. And then if there is additional
funding, that could be permanent, or additional basic ed
data that would help fund the long-term costs, the
personnel costs. Yes.

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

   MR. KESSLER: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

   Could you get us an update what projects are left
in that and where they’re at in the system, when you get a
chance. It would be nice to know where we stand on that.

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

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

Now, not every school district would want, say, metal detectors or other hardware, but would it be better
for the State through the school safety to do a bulk purchase order for those things to lower the overall cost for school districts and then have the school districts buy in when they want them or we send them out? Would that be a better way to do it, less cost?

MR. KESSLER: Yeah.

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

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

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

Thank you, Chairman.

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

Thank you all very much for your time and your patience. And I know we have all benefited from your testimony and answers today. Thank you.
PANEL III:

NATIONAL APPROACHES TO SCHOOL SAFETY

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

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

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

And ladies, you may begin when you’re ready.

Thank you for being here.

MS. PALMER: Good morning.

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

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

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

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

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

To begin, the Federal Gun-Free School Zones Act prohibits firearms in, or on the grounds of, or within a thousand feet of the school. Some States have expanded their definition of “school safety zones” or “gun-free zones” by specifying school buildings, property owned by school districts or adding “school functions” such as
activities taking place at a different location, and/or
school buses.

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

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

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

And with the recent addition of Florida, at least
eight States specifically identify school employees who
meet certain requirements as exempt from the State’s ban on
carrying firearms. Those requirements may conclude a
concealed carry license, completing a background check,
additional trainings, and I will get more into those
specifics in a minute.
We know of at least one State, California, that previously allowed local authorities to give permission to school employees to carry firearms, but as of late last year, has since repealed their law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’ll just close by saying that school safety and firearms in K-12 schools are complex and rapidly evolving
issues. And at NCSL, we are tracking over 120 pieces of school safety legislation just since the Parkland shooting. We’ll continue to follow these issues at the State and the Federal level and are here to support your work.

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

Thanks.

MS. SISNEROS: Good afternoon.

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

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

We do this in four ways. First, we compile information on education policies from early childhood through postsecondary education and the workforce. We issue relevant and timely reports. We are available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans and propose legislation and also provide testimony. And we also bring
education leaders together within their States and across States to interact, to collaborate, and learn from each other.

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

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

First, I’ll talk about school safety plans.

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

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

In addition to safety plans, some States have also implemented an oversight board such as a school safety
council or committee to study school safety. These groups look at school safety as part of a larger policy issue in the State, and many of the boards are charged with reviewing safety plans, issuing grants, drafting legislative recommendations, and designing model safety plans.

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

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

In addition, many statutes require that the State plan be developed in consultation with specific individuals. This includes law enforcement, community members, parents, school employees, and in Arizona, it also includes the consultation with mental health professionals, and in Wisconsin, it requires the consultation with criminal justice services.
I would like to talk a little bit about emergency response drills, and we found that at least 25 States require schools to carry out periodic emergency response drills other than fire, tornado, and shelter-in-place drills. Page 5 of your handout identifies those 25 States.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finally, I would like to talk a little bit about bullying, because I see that the list of your bills that
you are considering touches on bullying. And so as you know, there has been a growing awareness around bullying, and that has resulted in an increase of policy proposals.

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

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

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

On our website, there is a State Information Request about school safety issues. We are consistently tracking and analyzing legislation about these issues, and we’re updating that State Information Request to help
policymakers be aware of the most recent policy proposals.

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

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you, ladies.

Questions from Members?

Okay. I’ll throw one out.

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

I recently read that Texas has, I believe it’s referred to as the “school marshal program.” Are either of you familiar with that that you could share any details with the Members of the Committee?

MS. PALMER: Sure.

I believe I included, since Missouri, South Dakota, and Texas all have similar programs, in Texas it’s called the school marshal program. Missouri, I believe, is the -- one of them, South Dakota, is the sentinel program.
They all have different names. And Florida’s school guardian program is very similar. They all require a certain number of hours. I think it ranges from 80 to 130 hours of training.

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

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

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

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

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

Representative Gillen.

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

Harkening back to my period as a correctional officer, and even as a homeowner, we always thought in
terms of expanding the perimeter. You had an outside patrol, cameras, observation. What would you think of a crime-watch-oriented model where it was not intervention oriented but rather observe and report outside of the perimeter of the school?

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

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

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

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

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

    MS. SISNEROS: Oh; sure. Sure.

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

    REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

    MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Tallman.

    REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

    MS. PALMER: Unfortunately, I just track statutes, so I’m not tracking the implementation or the
local level at this time, but I’m happy to look into it.

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

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

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

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

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: If you could get that---

MS. PALMER: Sure.

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

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Any other questions?

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

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

MS. PALMER: Thank you.

MS. SISNEROS: Thank you.
PANEL IV:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE

SCHOOL SAFETY

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

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

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

MR. KRUG: Thank you.

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

I am Steve Krug. I’m an architect in West Chester. I have been designing schools and higher education facilities for over 35 years. And I represent AIA Pennsylvania, a component of the American Institute of Architects, representing the voices of nearly 3,000
registered architects throughout Pennsylvania, and many of our members are nationally recognized authorities on school planning and design.

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

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

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

One of the largest concerns regarding school safety in Pennsylvania is the age of our schools. More than 65 percent of the schools in Pennsylvania were built before 1970. Many of these schools have been renovated over time to upgrade their services, educational
opportunities, and safeguards, but far too many have not.

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

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

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

School safety and security can be addressed through comprehensive planning and by integrating building features that also serve to provide comfortable learning environments. I have a number of examples and ideas for 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.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, and I’ll take questions.

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

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

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

So I went through that training twice.

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

We just had our lockdown drill the other day, and we conducted it during a change-of-class period, and the goal was to get the students out of the hallways and in the
rooms and lock the rooms. Can you imagine having to decide when to close that door? And if there were students who were shot in the hallway or just trying to get in, at some point you have got to make that decision of when to close that door.

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

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

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

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

I really appreciate all of the discussion earlier. I got here a little bit late, but I was able to hear a lot of the preventative measures, and there’s a lot
of good ideas. And believe me, I hope that they work and
there’s never another school shooting that can’t be
prevented. But I also think if we’re honest with
ourselves, we know that those break down at some point.

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

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

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

I told myself, I’m going to act. I’m going to
act. I’m not going to wait for the police. I’m not going
to wait behind the door. Those options that I talked about
earlier aren’t very productive, because the two things that
have to happen during that 5 minutes until the police get
there is that person who is killing the kids must be
stopped, and then, as soon as possible, have people there
to start administering to whoever is injured. And the
people that we need most aren’t there, the police and EMS.
And we all know that EMS isn’t going to make it into the
building until the police clear it.

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

Thank you.

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

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

I have spent 7 years studying events like the
tragedy in Parkland, Florida, and I use my 11 years in
public education in New Jersey as a Spanish teacher and a school counselor to ground my research in experience and in practice.

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

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

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

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

The organization Sandy Hook Promise offers free programs like “Know the Signs” and “It Starts With Hello.”
These programs are founded in research, and they have clearly defined curricula for schools for easy implementation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As a high school counselor in a State with comprehensive harassment, intimidation, and bullying legislation, I can tell you that addressing these issues was profoundly time-consuming. It was certainly within the scope of my job description and it was important work. It required me to also then devote my time and take time from other students who may have felt overlooked or ignored in school.
So if you consider implementing these policies, you should also consider supplementing them with additional funds for more support staff, including counselors and student assistance coordinators, so that more students and all students will have access to resources and help.

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

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

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

DR. HELSEL: Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. As we all agree, student safety considerations are of paramount importance.
This issue is much too complex to look towards a singular solution. I encourage you, the Legislature, to grant school districts some latitude towards their efforts to keep our students safe. Our districts are very diverse in population, geographic size, staffing, and financial constraints. As stated earlier in other panels, a one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective or feasible.

One of the ideas being discussed here would be arming teachers and/or other district personnel. The Blue Mountain School District has been arming school district personnel for 5 years through assigning district maintenance staff to dual roles: that of armed security through the Act 235 certification process, as well as district and maintenance, building maintenance, responsibilities. They have gone through the training required, the hours, the certifications, weapons certifications, and everything required for armed security certification spelled out through Act 235.

We initially had two individuals trained and armed. We currently are down to one such individual due to a retirement. We have identified additional individuals for the training and are exploring those people being trained. They are currently maintenance and technology support, the people that go around and fix the students'
and teachers’ computers.

Our district has been training our staff and students in an armed intruder defense plan, referred to as ALICE. Many of you may have heard of it or have become familiar with it. ALICE is an acronym standing for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate. As you may be aware, this training was developed by law enforcement professionals in response to previous school shootings like Columbine and Virginia Tech. ALICE empowers teachers and staff to determine whether emergency evacuation or barricading doors themselves into a room is the best response.

Each room is being equipped with a device that makes entry into the classroom extremely difficult, if not impossible. In addition, every classroom has been equipped with a 5-gallon bucket full of river stone. If an armed intruder attempts to gain entrance to any of our classrooms, they will face a classroom full of students armed with rocks, and they will be stoned.

In addition, we do not presently plan to or would not, if given the opportunity, train teachers as Act 235 armed security due to their role in our planned response to armed intruders. Our plan requires teachers to lead their classroom’s safety efforts. They will need to decide whether or not to supervise the evacuation of their
students to a rallying point or barricading their classroom and preparing to defend and getting our students out of the line of fire.

The response to address is we carefully selected the people who would have access to be into the schools quickly but would not have a primary responsibility of supervising a classroom full of students. Our plan does not mean that we do not support granting other districts the option of arming teachers or other school personnel; it just does not fit with our personal plans and circumstance.

I personally recommend that school districts be empowered to make the individual decisions regarding armed personnel. Each district has unique situations where safety plans should be custom fitted to their circumstances.

It is my opinion that identifying people with the correct skillset, personality, stress tolerance, and attitude is more important than job title. Providing the selected staff members with high-quality ongoing training is also a critical component of this endeavor. They must be trained properly and be responsive.

And also, we need to make sure that anybody that is armed is also in uniform or some type of identifying characteristic when any police would respond and avoid any accidental shootings due to friendly fire.
I would also ask that you consider a few other things. I do thank you for your streamlining the comprehensive process by joining strategic planning and new teacher induction planning and Act 48 professional development planning and technology planning and special education planning, so you grouped those all together into a comprehensive plan. I would strongly, and I heard through rumors that new comprehensive planning will require it, but I would encourage you to require every district to also complete a safety plan every 3 years, just like they do for all the other areas of school operation. Include that in the comprehensive planning.

I would ask you that you consider mandating interagency training and cooperation, not just a memo of understanding that you revisit every 5 years but actually have them sit down and work. We have a web-based camera system that we could grant access to local law enforcement and other things and meeting and becoming familiar with facilities and getting to know, and also talking and alerting each other of potential threats or concerns. It’s critical also that people recognize each other and understand what all the protocols will be with the different agencies and organizations.

A lot of people are talking about bullying. I call it students being disenfranchised. I think schools
need to be able to do positive things and find out what triggers cause students being disenfranchised, not connected to their schools, feeling isolated. Those are common. Sometimes it’s bullying; sometimes it’s mental health; sometimes it’s a number of other things.

We test for proficiency in reading and math and science every year of students. I encourage us to consider some type of assessment process to see if they are basically a danger or something in some way or capacity. It doesn’t need to be a big long thing, but some way of trying to identify students that are at risk.

In addition, you know, everybody was asking for money. I do think that if necessary or possible, money could be provided for armed personnel, as stated earlier, but also money for training existing personnel if you choose to arm them. And that has to be an ongoing thing. If you are going to arm anyone, they not only need initial training but they need continued training, and they also need to be certified with their weapon on a regular basis.

I believe that cameras are very important, upgrading. Some people mentioned the cameras, because you can identify them. And it’s truly amazing, some of the new, the advances that people have made in cameras.

But also, cameras are important not only as a precaution or to catch people getting injured or whatever,
but in the case of, as somebody stated, if we do have an armed intruder, we have presently, we can have other people that are not stationed at that building remote in and actually communicate through the loudspeaker system to students and teachers.

What we have learned from Columbine and things of that nature is that it’s important to communicate where the intruder would be, and the best thing to do is to get the students, if the armed intruder is nowhere near where that classroom is, evacuate and get them out of the building and to a rallying point. So if you have moneys for an upgraded intercom system where people can remote in, view, identify where the armed intruder is, and tell them where they are.

Much like in Florida. Nobody announced where the intruder would be, and some of them ran right back into the building into harm’s way. So I think we can learn that cameras and intercom systems and communication devices to communicate to schools where the armed intruder would be could be beneficial and save lives if in case something like that would happen.

As you noticed and mentioned, when we’re talking about PlanCon, our schools were made with a lot of glass, and I’m not sure that every district can afford to replace every window with bulletproof glass. There are films and materials that you can add and put on windows that would
make them a little bit more secure and a little bit more resistant to being broken.

I sat recently at our middle school, and I’m looking at a wall of glass, and I’m there, my goodness, how would you stop an armed intruder, but we could at least try to slow it down by safeguarding and adding things to our windows and other devices to strengthen them.

There’s a lot of other equipment to secure doors and devices. A lot of people mentioned metal detectors and things of those things as well. But I think there are a lot of great ideas out there that could help improve the safety, and so I would ask you that you consider some grants and some financial support for those endeavors.

Thank you for your time.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you very much. Thank you all.

Just a quick question, maybe for Mark and David since you’re on the ground, you know, in schools every day.

We heard earlier from one of our panelists, prior panelists, that an unscientific survey that was recently done of schoolteachers showed that there was virtually no support among schoolteachers statewide for arming teachers or school personnel.

I’m just curious, as two guys who are on the ground in schools, you know, what is your experience in
talking with other teachers and school personnel, you know, the level of support that would be out there in your school district, Mark, and in your school district, David, you know, for arming teachers or school personnel?

MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, we have, right now, 50 teachers in our building, and there are probably over 15 to 20 of them that have concealed carry permits already. All of them would be at least interested in pursuing it and getting the training, if that opportunity existed.

Now, that’s just in our building. I know throughout our district, we have six buildings, and I know I have spoken to teachers in other buildings, and I would say at least four or five in each of those buildings.

I have also had a large number of teachers in our building who also said, I would never want to do this, but I would feel good if you were here. And, you know, again, it’s not for everybody, you know, because of the training.

If you go to a notable training like I did out in Ohio, developed by John Benner, you just don’t show up and pass. There is a very, you know, stringent training program along with the qualification, and actually, the qualification exceeds what Ohio police officers have to exceed in terms of the firearm qualification, so.

But I can honestly say, you know, again, in our
district, that there is a strong interest for it, because, again, they have those same thoughts that I have had: What are we going to do for those 5 minutes until the police get here.

DR. HELSEL: My experience is fairly similar. Some teachers and staff members would not be comfortable doing it in any way. Some would be very concerned about being secured in. If you are in a lockdown and being overpowered, much like, you know, people -- that’s why there’s only one gun on an airplane. In case it would ever be in a lockbox, so some people have brought those types of ideas up to me during discussion.

Some feel like they have connected to kids, and God forbid if it was actually one of the students they had in class, whether or not they would even be able to do anything because they care about a kid, even if they are the armed intruder. Some people aren’t comfortable with taking the life of another individual regardless.

So there were a lot of opinions. Some were interested and willing. Some felt if they had experience and would be interested in the training. Some were very much not; they did not have any interest in the slightest in that endeavor.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

Chairman Roebuck.
MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to ask Mr. Krug, in terms of the concept of a locked vestibule, which sort of focuses everything on one entrance to a school building, if I’m understanding it correctly, I understand how that perhaps is a good thing for someone trying to get into the school, but what about someone trying to get out of the school?

So if there were an internal emergency in that school, what happens then to all those people in the school who have to, I assume, go through basically this one entrance to get out?

MR. KRUG: For school design, we have to design all of the exiting for an emergency to get people out. That’s in the building codes. It’s called emergency exiting requirements, and we do calculations on the number of people and how fast we have to get them out. That’s the first thing that happens.

The getting in through a vestibule, that has a couple of different functions, and you can have a single vestibule, or if you design the building for a large school, you may have multiple entrances. You can have multiple vestibules, which was described earlier, three entrances for the high school in the City of York, for instance.
And the vestibule concept is that in the morning when students are arriving and there is supervision, teachers, administration, that is out there supervising the arrival, that those doors are open and you can walk right through the vestibule. The idea then is that when school is in session then, that the vestibule is closed and you then have to enter through the vestibule and then through the main office and get checked in so that you are registered as a visitor. That’s the concept of going in.

But that free or controlled flow in or out of the building when it is supervised is for egress and emergency sake.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Suppose there were a boiler explosion and the school catches on fire. Does that mean everyone has to go out through that procedure, through the office, to get out of the building?

MR. KRUG: No, only---

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Because one of the issues certainly is that you also have to close off alternative entrances to the school. I guess I’m having a problem with, I know that in my district, we have a lot of older school buildings.

MR. KRUG: Yeah.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: There was a problem -- and I’m from Philadelphia. The problem was that kids
would go into a school using these exits and let people in
and out, breaching the security process. And at one point,
they began to lock those doors, put chains on them, which
means you can’t get out of those doors.

MR. KRUG: That would be illegal.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: So with your system,
though, there is a way to get out of the doors even when
you have this system that no one can get in?

MR. KRUG: Yeah. It’s called panic hardware. It
allows you to go out during a panic situation, during a
fire or any other time, and then those entrances are not
open for general use but they are open for exiting during
an emergency.

MINORITY CHAIRMAN ROEBUCK: Okay. Well, I look
forward to some further conversation on this, and I
appreciate your testimony.

Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative
Reese.

REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I first want to start by thanking the panel.
Your testimony, I think, is very valuable, and I hope it’s
a source of information for us when we are developing our
legislation.

So today we’re joined by one of my constituents,
Pastor Werner, and Pastor Werner is a member of a group in my community called Christians Uniting, and it does some pretty good work in our community. And they have actually partnered with one of our public schools and have an afterschool program where students and parents, if they choose, can go to one of our local churches and have activities and a snack after school. It has certainly proved to be beneficial in our community.

And my question really is for Dr. Daly and anybody else who would like to chime in on it. Has your research -- and I know you have done extensive research on these issues. Has your research showed any benefit to having faith-based programs tied to our schools, in that way. And I understand it’s tied to our schools, but somewhat separate. Can you give us any information on that?

DR. DALY: Right.

So from a criminological theory standpoint, we say that when there are social bonds present, so either through institutions or families or relationships, then crime is less likely to occur.

If we look at this in relation to school shootings, there are reasons that the captain of the football team is not committing the school shooting. So I think that anything we can do with any institutions is
important.

So I didn’t find any relationship specifically with faith-based organizations, but I would say that any commitment or attachment or belief to an institution or an organization, or just people in general, I think would have a profoundly deterrent effect for something like this, because you’re creating a situation in which there is something to lose in terms of either disappointment or relationships.

REPRESENTATIVE REESE: Okay. Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Quigley.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony as a panel.

Dr. Daly, in your research, are there any common themes or threads of these shooters? You know, is there severe dysfunction in their families? Is there, you know, bullying? Are there any common themes there?

And, you know, the whole idea of mental illness, and I think that’s something that obviously is going to be a part of the discussion here. But, you know, is it -- and I know some people even in the mental health community are concerned about this labeling of “mental illness” when there are, you know, a variety of illnesses, some severe and then some that, you know, are fairly common among
people in the various stages of their lives.

But, I mean, in your research, have you seen, you know, a common thread that you -- in some of those examples that I gave, is there a commonality there?

DR. DALY: So when I started out with my dissertation research, I initially started with the common causes that people tend to blame, so bullying, mental illness, violent video games. And what we have to look at is that there are millions of children and millions of students every day that experience any number of those factors and don’t go out and commit horrific acts of violence.

So what I wanted to do instead was to look at the conjunction of different issues, and what I found most commonly with school shooters was that there was at least symptoms, there were at least reported symptoms or a mental health diagnosis before the attack in about 25 percent of school shooters from 1966 to 2012, but most importantly, that that combined with other instances of failure, so let’s say like social failure or relational failure. And so there’s not really a temporal aspect to it that I can point to, if the mental illness affected social interactions first or if the social interactions kind of exacerbated mental health issues.

But I think we have to be very careful about
issues of mental health and talking about it because it’s such a broad spectrum. You know, we saw with the Sandy Hook attack that there was a discussion about autism and Asperger’s disorder, which is profoundly rare that we would see a really violent attack like this. And so that could stretch, the spectrum could stretch all the way to bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

So when we say mental health, we have to be very careful, but we have to look at it in the context of a lot of other things, like socializing, friendship, stable family lives. But what I found most often is the interaction of a number of different factors.

So when I hear about approaches that kind of throw everything at the wall to see what sticks, it’s not the worst idea, because there are a lot of things that we have to address all at once, and it’s not just that we have to do them singularly but rather we have to address them at the same time.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: And in your research, if you’re looking, you know, let’s go back to let’s say the 1950s to the present. There were obviously acts of violence that took place in the 1950s, ’60s, ’70s. Is it more? Has there been a spike in these types of instances in, let’s say from year 2000 to the present as opposed from going to 2000 back to 1950?
DR. DALY: So what’s hard is that when we look at the data -- I started my research in 1966 with the attack at the water tower at the University of Texas, if some people remember.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Right.

DR. DALY: But it’s hard, because things were underreported then, right? With the 24-hour news cycle, we have a lot more information now. So even cases that we might not have heard about in the fifties, sixties, or seventies, that affects what we know about the occurrences.

What I will say is that 1999 was one of the deadliest years for school shootings. I would point to Columbine as being kind of a turning point.

And what I would say now is that we’re seeing them kind of in rapid succession, and I would absolutely point to the news cycles but also kind of this idea of making these school shooters famous. There is a push nationally among mass shooting researchers; there are about 150 of us that have signed a petition to not name the shooters anymore.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Right.

DR. DALY: That we are giving ignored and overlooked marginalized children free publicity so that there is something to be gained, in a sense. So if we take that away, then there might be a different reward to that.
But there has absolutely been an increase in the numbers, and especially in the past 20 years.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay.

And then Mark, if I could, a question for you.

And again, you're from Indiana County in the western part of the State, and, you know, in your testimony about the police response time, you know, some of my colleagues who are from that area -- and I brought this up with the Major and the State Police. And again, nothing against, you know, I'm not taking any decisionmaking away or trying to say that the State Police aren't doing their job.

But do you find that in an area like yours that is more rural than let's say where I'm from, down in Montgomery County, the southeastern part of Pennsylvania, that there might be more of a support for your type of approach as opposed to, if I were to propose this down in my area, there might not be as much support. Do you see a cultural, for lack of a better term, in Pennsylvania, an east versus west cultural divide on this issue?

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

I think, you know, again, and people have been saying all day long, you know, every situation is going to be different and it should be, you know, ultimately up to the local control.
But I could tell you, you know, Indiana --
actually, Indiana Area High School is in the town of
Indiana where Indiana University of Pennsylvania is. We do
have actually a borough police force. Some of our schools
are within that jurisdiction, some are out. We have the
State Police that patrol, and we also have the county
sheriff’s office is near there. Now, there may be deputies
there or not. And also, the university itself has its own
police force. They don’t really have any type of
concerted, you know, cooperative with one another on who
would respond, but I think that’s something that they’re
working on.

But there are districts nearby me, and I can tell
you, at Marion Center, there was a domestic dispute that
carried over, which Marian Center is about 10 miles from
Indiana, Pennsylvania. And we have some of our -- we do
have one resource officer at our senior high school
building, not in the other five, and he tells the story,
when he got the call at the barracks, which was in Indiana,
he drove 130 miles an hour to get there, and it took him
10 minutes to get there, but he got there. And it was,
again, a spouse that came in and pursued somebody and shot
her in the school.

But schools like that, you know, there the
response time can be anywhere from 15, 20, 30 minutes, and
again, that’s an awful long time to endure an attack like we saw in Parkland, and I think it would be much more receptive.

I know a lot of teachers have contacted me, because what I did when I first learned about, you know, Ohio, the State of Ohio who has, I think, over 200 school districts who have armed teachers in them now, and so the people in Ohio actually refer them back to me to kind of see where the status is in Pennsylvania and so forth. So there has been a lot of inquiries I have received over the last several months, actually, with smaller districts that are rural and not in the city schools.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: And, Mr. Chairman, if I could, just one more.

Again, Dr. Daly. Real quick.

DR. DALEY: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: In your examination of these school shootings, is there a differentiation between, say, someone who is under the age of 21 and then people who are over the age?

Like Virginia Tech, these college shootings, obviously that person is, you know, in their early 20s. Have you seen a difference in motivation or a difference in why the person who is under 21 acted versus the person who is over 21?
DR. DALY: There is a growing body of research now that looks at active and mass shootings across the board, that if we just look at school shooters, we might be missing certain elements of it in the comparative efforts, of comparing them, let’s say, to a workplace shooter or postal workers from the eighties.

What I think was most interesting is that a colleague of mine and a member of my dissertation committee found that school shooters had a profound amount in common with suicide terrorists around the world in that they had a history of kind of social and professional failure and that they were looking to die with a purpose. And so I think that if we can kind of look at this across the board in different ways, that we can help not only schools but also workplaces and public areas to be safe in terms of prevention. I think that would be the most helpful.

That’s why I focus a lot on warning signs and Extreme Risk Protection Orders, because those are things that can address or can help all types of violence, not just kind of isolated school shootings.

REPRESENTATIVE QUIGLEY: Okay. Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative Tallman.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And Dr. David and Mark, you have been contrary to
all the testimony today, including what’s in my select
committee report. And so if I reach out to you later, just
be prepared.

This is actually for Mr. Krug, and I’m going to
kind of piggyback on what Chairman Roebuck mentioned.

So the school building has to be designed to be
able to get students, staff, out in X number of minutes?

MR. KRUG: Correct.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: What’s that X number?

MR. KRUG: Oh; the capacity of each opening is
determined by the number of people that can get through it
in a certain period of time, and I can get back to you on
that. But it’s a rapid, very rapid period of time.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Do you think there’s
actually a design criteria saying you should be able to---

MR. KRUG: Well, the building codes require that
each opening, each door opening, can handle a certain
amount of people at a certain flow rate. And so you
calculate the capacity of each opening based on the number
of people.

And stairs are the same way. Stairs and
hallways, the widths, are also determined that way.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: So just thinking about
school districts I have visited, including the ones that my
children have been in, I now have grandchildren in, there
are multiple doors.

MR. KRUG: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: And if you look at security protocols, doors are considered areas to be breached.

MR. KRUG: Correct.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: So if I’m going to -- I would have to be somewhat aggressive, but if I was going to breach a school building, I would do it at the door. So what are architects doing to make that much less likely to have that door breached? A solid brick wall is one thing, but a door is the opening in the brick wall.

MR. KRUG: Right.

Many exit ways that are only for emergency exit are metal doors, typically. Those that are front doors, they are a mixture of glass and metal because they are more welcoming at the front entrance. However, those back doors that are exit ways are typically, a lot of them are metal doors.

REPRESENTATIVE TALLMAN: Thank you.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Representative English.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For Dr. Daly, in a second. Any statistics on accidental discharges? I heard a college earlier mention
some. If you have any information.

But before that, while you’re thinking about that, for the superintendent, I’m intrigued by the rocks. I had not heard about that in a lot of readings, and do you give them slingshots or are they not permitted?

DR. HELSEL: No. We have some people who have some pretty good arms. They can chuck a rock pretty fast.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: But no; I don’t mean that jokingly. I mean, sincerely, I hope, you know, every teacher and everyone would, you know, whether it’s hot coffee or, you know, whatever tool you have to try to suppress and take advantage of that.

But did you consider any other non-lethal methods, such as rubber bullets or arming with rubber bullets, so if we had an accidental discharge there wasn’t issues, or Tasers, or any other non-lethal methods that your district went through in analyzing?

DR. HELSEL: As far as, obviously they have pepper spray. There is limitations of what you can do with Act 235 certification, you know, as far as armed and things of that nature. You know, if you have Act 120 certification versus Act 235, you know; if you have full-fledged police officer training. We looked at those nonlethal, and we do have that our people are also manned with pepper spray.
As far as with the rocks in the classrooms,
that's just for our students for the last, you know,
instead of like where we used to have them all huddle down
underneath desks, and, you know, we have learned from
Virginia Tech where the gentleman that went, that did it,
actually went to a shooting range a week before and
actually put the targets on the ground, because he knew
students were going to be hunkered down, laying down under
the desks and shot there.

So basically, the ALICE idea is that if you are
going to secure, then you get out of the way. But the idea
is, we have rocks. ALICE says anything. Some people have
had golf balls, but golf balls bounce around, and I was
afraid of collateral damage with our kids, so I thought the
rocks won't bounce.

So actually, it was pretty easy. We just had a
dump truck full; go over to a landscaper and get river
stone. And they're nice, they're smooth, and you can
really hurl them pretty quickly, and hard.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: And I commend your
practical thinking.

Dr. Daly, any accidental information?

DR. DALY: So my research didn’t cover any
accidental shooting, but I also study other criminal
justice issues, so I would point to studies in which
police officers, highly trained police officers in active situations, hit their target about 30 to 40 percent of the time, and that’s usually in an open-air situation.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Okay.

And for our mathematics teacher, the training that you went through in Ohio, what was the length of time for, you said you went through it twice.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: But what was the length of time, and I’m just curious how many rounds and---

MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, it was 3 days, and it just wasn’t only shooting. There was a mindset component talking about some of the same things that we were discussing earlier about the mental state of the perpetrator and also the teachers and what those things would take. There is also an emergency medical portion of the training as well. And then a lot is done on the range.

There is also a method that is referred to as “force-on-force training,” and our military participates with that, along with SWAT teams and so forth, and it is essentially running through live scenarios with airsoft guns or, you know, altered guns that shoot paintballs and that sort of thing so that you can react in those situations or be able to shoot in context.
And the amount of rounds that we shot over the 3 days was right around 1,000. And we, like I said, at the end of the course, we had to shoot the same exact qualification that the police officers do, but only had to score at a higher hit rate than what they do in order to get certified.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: Okay. Thank you. I mean, my time in the Marine Corps, I fired under many different situations. I have been to many of those simulated trainings. I have observed my police officers doing it, and many erroneous shots in their training. I just have a definite concern when the scenario you described, when you’re trying to get the kids in from the hallway, well, if you’re going out into the hallway, how are you correctly identifying the actual shooter---

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: ---and that’s always a concern.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Well, it is.

And, you know, that’s something that we do go -- actually, we did that simulation in an actual school building and set that up as such and, you know, had the role players as students and so forth.

And basically in the training, you don’t shoot when there’s a danger of hitting somebody else, and you
work on positioning yourself so that you could deliver rounds to stop that person from a position where you wouldn’t endanger anybody else.

Obviously, nothing is ever going to be perfect, particularly in a panic situation. But, you know, again, you know, just sitting there not being able to do anything to stop them, in my mind, is way worse than trying to confront and stop that person.

And then again, that’s not to even mention, you know, some of the psychology we talked about. They want to die in glory. They want to get a high body count, so to speak. And they’re going to avoid places where there’s going to be resistance, and that probably would be the most useful, and it’s hard to enumerate, but useful, you know, benefit from having people there that are able to respond immediately.

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH: I appreciate your candor. It is certainly a tough balance that we all undertake here.

Thank you for your time.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNEL: Representative Grove.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Thank you all. I really appreciate you being here today.

Mr. -- Zilinskas? Did I get it?
MR. ZILINSKAS: That’s it.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Yes. I’m not good with last names.

Representative Fee had a question: How long has Ohio had armed teachers in that State?

MR. ZILINSKAS: They have been doing it for 5 years, and the organization that I went through the training has trained over, as I mentioned, 1,300 faculty, administrators and staff, that sort of thing.

And I know that they don’t have exact numbers on actually how many teachers in Ohio that do currently, because there are other organizations that do the training. But they have been doing that for 5 years.

I know some other States, the ladies mentioned earlier, that have been doing it a lot longer than that. I know Utah has been one since the nineties. They have had some sort of provision to have people armed in high schools.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Through your research and looking into this and you yourself deciding to go through this process, and I completely understand that magical time frame between when police arrive, and that’s why a lot of people conceal carry personally, because police arrive after something starts, and let’s say they’re luckily there at the time of the occurrence.
School districts with armed teachers,
administrators, whatever, how many incidences have they
had, whether it was a school violence issue, whether it’s
with a firearm, another method, or the difference between,
or what unfortunate incident -- I just was reading an
article about, unfortunately, a teacher who had a discharge
of a firearm in a school district.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Mm-hmm.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: What have you seen through
your research with both of those scenarios?

MR. ZILINSKAS: There haven’t been any incidents
in Ohio that are like that.

Now, I know the thing in California, we don’t
know all the facts about that. But, I mean, if you have
gone through proper training, you never, ever handle your
firearm in that type of situation. It just doesn’t happen.
That firearm is in your holster, and you’ll get that in
training. I mean, that’s a cardinal -- you don’t bring it
out, you don’t touch it, unless there’s going to be an
incident in which it’s needed. So I’m not sure what
happened there.

Other provisions. You know, if you are an armed
teacher, you know, nobody knows who you are, you know,
other than the school administrators, and you carry
concealed in an approved, secure holster. So nobody is
going to know how many there are and who they are.

The other thing is, you avoid getting in situations. Let’s say there was a fight in the cafeteria, you know, and everybody looks to me. I’m 6-4, 220 pounds. You know, if somebody like me was an armed teacher, I wouldn’t even get near that fight, because again, you wouldn’t want to introduce the firearm in some situation like that or have the potential.

So a lot of those things, you know, if you have the proper training, you know, again, it’s a tool just like anything else. You have got to, you know, have certain things you do and don’t do with that particular tool.

And so as far as, again, over the last 5 years, there has never been any incident whatsoever where, you know, kids have tried to wrestle a firearm off the teacher or a teacher has got upset and shot their kids. I mean, it just doesn’t happen.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: The bills in front of the House, you mentioned Senator White’s, Representative Dush’s bill. There’s one in the House and one in the Senate.

Can you review them quickly with us? They’re not a mandate.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: It’s up to the locals.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Right.
REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: What kind of training?
Does it specify any kind of training?

MR. ZILINSKAS: Right.

I mean, basically the Legislature, I guess when you vote for this and the Governor would sign it, would leave it up to the school district whether or not they wanted to have a provision to arm their teachers. So it would immediately then go to the school board, and really pretty much the State would be out of it at that point, unless there are some training requirements.

The school district on that part then, you have to get the teachers, who would first volunteer. You know, they wouldn’t be required in any way, shape, or form.

Then after they volunteer, they would have to be approved and not have a history of anything that would be considered to be at risk if they would have a firearm in any instance. And they probably shouldn’t be teaching if they were at risk.

The next thing that would happen is the teacher would go and get the approved training and then demonstrate competency, and then come back to that district and be able, again, to respond in that situation.

So, yeah, I don’t think it would be good to have a mandate, again, because some school districts, particularly city school districts, they already have their
own police forces in there with metal detectors and police officers right in the building ready to respond. Other school districts don’t have that, don’t have those resources.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: I know one concern from law enforcement, talking with one of my chiefs, is upon police entering a building, you know, and it has been mentioned multiple times that their one sole job is to put down the intruder.

You know, State Police had an active shooter presentation at one of my senior centers. I was there. And they basically said, don’t expect us, when we’re coming in, if you are shot on the floor, to help you; you’re on your own. So, you know, they recommend triage, getting up to date on emergency procedures, and those kinds of things.

But as an armed teacher, did your training help alleviate any concern for police entering the building with armed staff?

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

Communication is vital, and that goes into the training of what to do after that incident ends and when the police arrive and so forth. And a really good training program and a preparation program would also involve local law enforcement so that there would be communication, a way to identify coming in. I mean, the police aren’t going to
come in and just shoot anything that moves. That’s part of their training.

You mentioned they won’t stop, and that’s true, they won’t stop and help anybody medically, because the main priority is to stop that person as soon as possible, so.

But being able to have, the faculty and staff to have, you know, similar force-on-force training and, you know, have and practice the police officers arriving on scene and how to behave and what to do with your firearm at that point and, you know, reholster and so forth and communicate with them, and with some of the newer technologies out to be able to communicate with them, would avoid that type of situation where a police officer would maybe shoot the armed teacher, you know.

And the other thing, and I said to our school resource officer, I would much rather take the risk of you shooting me coming in on entry as opposed to somebody who I know is trying to shoot me and our kids. I would much rather take that risk as a teacher.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay.

And maybe, Dr. Helsel, you can weigh in on this one.

Insurance concerns with arming teachers. Has there ever been a discussion about how the insurance side
of this would work, if your insurance carrier would continue to insure them? And I don’t know how it’s done in Ohio. I would assume those school districts still have insurance.

DR. HELSEL: We never pursued that, obviously, because we haven’t been thinking about arming teachers. But it was important with our insurance carriers and things for liability to make sure you had the proper certifications and the policies, you know, the board policies that we had to research and go through our legal, our solicitor’s advice, and research regarding before arming our other staff members.

REPRESENTATIVE GROVE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you.

Representative Gillen.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Dr. Helsel, over to your left, over here.

DR. HELSEL: Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: You had mentioned in your testimony some of the dual roles, maintenance and tech support, in terms of arming personnel in the school. What’s the attitude of the rest of the staff, teachers, to using those dual-role individuals? Are they comfortable with that? I know you probably haven’t taken a survey, but
you must be getting feedback on that.

DR. HELSEL: I haven’t heard anything negative regarding that. I think that they wear a badge. It’s not a concealed carry or anything of that nature, so they are clearly visible as far as that.

I think that if they go -- because they also do events, athletic events. They become part of the culture there, so they accept it, they see it, and they recognize it. So I haven’t heard anything negative.

They are aware of what’s going on, and the people we look at, like I said before, we look for a particular skillset. We’re fortunate to have maintenance people with armed service experience under their belts prior to this or other skills that have afforded them the opportunity to already have some initial training.

And, you know, obviously part of this certification is also they have to go through a psych, pass a psych evaluation, before they even start any training or any weapons certification.

So I have not heard anything negative about it from parents or staff members, personally.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

And one other brief question, and just a lighter moment.

I was doing some landscaping not long ago, and it
happened to be river rocks, and my 4-year-old was assisting me. And as you can imagine, her assistance included throwing a river rock, which hit me. And so there is a certain amount of stopping power, and I can imagine that a large number of them coming at an individual, as a last resort, may have some efficacy.

But in line with that, to avoid resistance by the perpetrator, what do we keep close to our vests, and it could be for any of our testifiers. Defense involves an element of surprise, so are there things we don’t want to reveal about our defensive posture?

DR. HELSEL: Yes. We don’t want to respond, obviously, how we’re going to respond immediately and things of that nature. We chose to make it well known about the river stone because we want, if it’s an existing student, to be aware that the chances are that they are going to be stoned severely if they try to do anything.

So certain things with your plans. We have different rallying points that we change from different classrooms. And so obviously we don’t like to advertise all of our plans. Certain things we leak out because we see that it is a potential deterrent.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: And when you do your training for the river-stone throwing, I would like to observe that as a Member of the House Education Committee.
DR. HELSEL: Okay. We will.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLEN: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: We’ll take the
Committee on the road for that. How’s that?

Representative Brown.

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you again,
Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your testimony.

So I’m going to take you on a little bit of a
softer approach, just because you’re here, and it’s really
for Mark and for Dr. Helsel and based on Dr. Daly’s
statistics on, you know, 25 percent of students having, or
shooters having a preexisting mental diagnosis, and then
the rest of what we heard mostly in the media is a lot of
social failures or some issues of that nature.

So I know one of the school districts in my
district has positions, paid positions, where they are
almost monitors, and they have their eyes set on social
situations a little. I think they do other things besides
that.

But my question is to you, since you are here --
I probably would have liked to have asked some of the
previous testifiers, too. But just because of what
Dr. Daly said with her stats, as a superintendent and as a
teacher, do you believe that there may be an opportunity
for volunteer types of positions in our school districts
for almost like a social director in a sense, but something
of a nature where, you know, there’s someone kind of
getting a feel for students and seeing the social
interactions? Is there an opportunity there that you might
think would be helpful in some way?

And we have talked about senior citizens
volunteering and then, you know, rebates, small rebates on
property taxes or things like that. But just your feedback
on that nature.

DR. HELSEL: Volunteers are great. They can
certainly lend a hand, but it also depends on their
training. Also, confidentiality. If they’re getting into
some deeply personal things with students and they’re not
really an employee, I would be a little bit concerned with
confidentiality if they heard something through the
discussions of that nature.

I think the power is doing positive messages,
whether it’s, you know, our school started the positive
behavior intervention system. We’re trying to get them
early where we’re building connections, rewarding having
every kid make connections. And I think that’s where the
volunteers can help, through endeavors of that nature,
where you’re doing things to reward and make every kid feel
a little bit more connected to school.
But as far as the identification and addressing those types of issues, that would concern me through using volunteers.

MR. ZILINSKAS: Yeah.

I mean, I would like to think as teachers we develop those relationships with students and have a really good feel because we spend so much time with them, you know, in our classes and so forth. We coach them in different sports.

Just recently, I retired from football, but I coached football for over, you know, 30 years. So, you know, I think we have a lot of that, and we also have people from the outside who volunteer coach and develop relationships with those kids.

I know recently, you know, one of the things that I have been, you know, looking at, and it’s not just firearms in school. I mean, I want school safety, and there’s a wide variety of different components that we have already talked about, and one is there’s a psychologist from our guidance center who is going to come in and talk to and address the kids about the importance of -- if anything is going on in social media, the kids are going to know, and they have to understand the importance of letting the proper people know ahead of time.

Just recently, Uniontown Area School District
just stopped somebody before it started. That’s the best outcome, because, you know, everything, the plan was all there, the weapons were all there, but yet they got word and were able to go in and stop the kid before he started. And, you know, the kid hopefully is getting the help that he needs, and nobody got hurt in that situation.

But again, unfortunately, sometimes that breaks down, and then that’s, you know, that’s the other component. But, you know, we’re working to do things like that, and I think, you know, the volunteers do kind of filter in, at least to our school district, mainly through the coaching of other sports.

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN HICKERNELL: Thank you. That was our final question.

So I would like to thank the four of you for your informative testimony today and bearing with us as we went a little bit beyond our scheduled time.

Thanks to all the testifiers, all the Members who spent time here today, and the members of the public who joined us. I think we had a very informative hearing, and with that, the hearing is adjourned.

Thank you very much.

(At 1:25 p.m., the public hearing adjourned.)
I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings are a true and accurate transcription produced from audio on the said proceedings and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

Debra E. Miller

Transcriptionist
dbmreporting@msn.com