

Cathy O'Donnell

From: Lawrence Borland <blackrosemd@me.com>
Sent: Monday, March 12, 2018 10:51 AM
To: Cathy O'Donnell
Subject: Followup: Ed Committee on Safety/Security March 15th

Hello,

Thank you for accepting the written statement.

Q: My statement includes a short (4.5minute) Quick time .mov from my most recent presentation at our local school board (I am president of FRSD) SB.

I will mail the CD with the .mov file on the public school board presentation to you today

Thank you again,

Lawrence M Borland, M.D.

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Hello,

I would have loved to come and testify at the PA House Education Committee mtg on School Safety/Security on Thursday March 15th but was told that the agenda and selection for presentations had already been filled.

I am sending you this in substitute as I understand it will be included in the information being distributed.

Why I am speaking for myself (and not the “board” of FRSD), I am echoing the thoughts of several other members.

First my background:

I am currently in my 2nd 4 yr term as the school board president of Franklin Regional School District which is in Westmoreland Co., PA.

I am a pediatrician and pediatric anesthesiologist, trained at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and practiced at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh (CHPgh) for ~ 33 yrs before retiring.

I am no stranger to trauma and injuries in children. My career has been in the care of sick and seriously injured children/teenagers. That background was put to the test as my school - FRSD - was the school with the site of the mass STABBING incident on April 9th 2015. I was in the operating room at CHPgh that morning to receive seriously injured, I would be negligent in not acknowledging the care of the 1st responders as well as other hospitals (in particular Forbes Regional Hospital) that morning. Despite multiple near fatal stab injuries, all were resuscitated and survived intact.

I have another hat. I have been a certified firearms instructor for almost 50 yrs. I have a healthy respect for firearms and see them as a tool to protect myself and those I love from evil-doers (if necessary).

Now to today. Communities, school boards, legislatures, parents, and children are again (after Florida) struggling with many, many emotions and fears.

Nevertheless it is the task of responsible school boards and legislatures to attempt to make rational decisions - decisions where the + and - consequences of each action is weighed and deliberated.

In that vein, I have included a video copy of my presentation (saved as a QuickTime .mov) at the March 5th FRSD School Board mtg. I intended to project many things: shared concern, compassion, understanding, responsibility, and strength in preventing & dealing with potential acts of violence.

First Step: convey to the public (parents, students, teachers, community) that the BOD (or legislature) shares the concerns that exists in the public.

2nd Step: convey (to same) that the BOD (or legislature) is actively deliberating and discussing the root causes of these acts of violence. For only by discovering these BEHAVIORAL issues which are the "devils that haunt" future students who may ultimately do harm to themselves and others.

3rd Step: convey (to same) that the BOD (or legislature)

is actively discussing all future steps to PREVENT such incidents. Yes PREVENTION includes improving the mental health of these troubled children.

4th Step: Decide on actions both passive and active to prevent and/or minimize the impact of such evil acts but certainly weigh the (+ & -) of each possible action.

5th Step:

Charge that parents must understand that “respect for human life” is paramount and that they must **re-assume** the responsibility of modeling this respect in word and action.

Parents LISTEN/OBSERVE their children - not just the spoken word but also the UNSPOKEN word/behavior that is crying for help.

Parents must understand that the above includes evaluation and perhaps limiting children/teenage access to violent video games which serve to “desensitize” to violence and killing. Violence and killing which appears to be homogenized and nice and neat - something one does and then goes to get a pizza from the refrigerator. Are all video games bad? No. But many children are allowed to play video games which are well beyond their capacity to connect to the real world. In the real world, someone’s dying and death is (or should be) accompanied by personal emotions including sadness, horror, etc. None of that occurs in killing in video games. These games desensitize and sanitize murder and killing. They may be perfect training for military drone pilots but should not be training for our children as citizens.

I have strong words of condemnation for both Federal

and State lawmakers who have seen fit to “in essence” label schools as SAFE & EASY TARGETS. Yes there has been violence at schools for decades and decades but today individuals with warped and/or sadistic attitudes can carry out horrific acts with little or no threat of their act being stopped short thus thwarting their goal of personal vindication, revenge, or notoriety.

Finally, I believe that each community should be able to decide IF (yes IF) there should be armed personnel in the school. Armed could mean any or all of following (not inclusive list) - armed local police, armed PSO, armed commercial or school security personnel, and finally armed teachers/administrators.

I close with an excerpt from a CATO Institute white paper on Terrorism because it is so applicable to the situation with school violence. Just substitute “school violence & shootings” for terrorism.

“Public opinion is the primary driver behind the extensive and excessive counterterrorism efforts undertaken since 9/11, and officials and elites are more nearly responding to public fear than creating it. Policymakers can do little, if anything, to reduce the fear of terrorism-if people want to be afraid, nothing will stop them. Moreover, because of the

special formlessness, even spookiness, of terrorism's hostile foreign referent in this case, it may be exceptionally difficult to get people to believe that the threat has really been extinguished or at least that it is no longer particularly significant.

However, this means that policymakers are, in an important sense, free to do their job right: they can expend money responsibly in a manner that best saves lives rather than in one that seeks to reduce unjustified, and perhaps unfathomable, fears." (1)

(1) <https://www.cato.org/publications/white-paper/public-opinion-counterterrorism-policy#full>