

APPENDIX

Testimony of Alexis Karteron  
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Joint Hearing of the New Jersey Senate Education Committee and  
New Jersey Assembly Education Committee on School Security

April 23, 2018  
Newark, New Jersey

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\* My affiliation with Rutgers is listed here for identification purposes only. I do not offer this testimony on behalf of Rutgers University or any of its units.

I respectfully submit the following testimony on school security. Thank you to the Assembly and Senate Education Committees for providing the opportunity to offer testimony on this important topic.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A tragedy befell the entire country when shots rang out at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018. We were all shocked to hear of a former student turning a high-powered weapon on students, faculty, and staff, leaving 17 dead and 15 seriously wounded. As the New Jersey Legislature considers what policies it might enact to prevent similar occurrences, I offer observations and recommendations related to a frequent proposed response to mass shootings in schools: an increased law enforcement presence.

I have had the opportunity to explore the role of law enforcement in K-12 schools in my academic research at Rutgers. I will be publishing an article in a law journal imminently about the constitutional standards for arrests and uses of force in school. Before joining the Rutgers faculty, I litigated cases concerning the role of law enforcement officers in schools in New York City and Syracuse as a senior attorney at the New York Civil Liberties Union. Both my academic research and litigation experience have led me to the conclusion that the New Jersey Legislature should proceed with caution if it intends to address the role of law enforcement officers in public schools in any effort to improve school security.

All agree that the need to protect schoolchildren is of paramount importance. There is a natural inclination to turn to law enforcement agencies to provide such protection. But research reveals that the presence of law enforcement agents in schools can be damaging to school climate in ways that undermine the educational experience. In particular, when law enforcement agents patrol schools, normal misbehavior is deemed criminal, particularly for youth of color. I therefore recommend that the Senate and Assembly Education Committees take steps to ensure that any legislation designed to promote school security account for the significant risk that an increased police presence in schools will harm school climate and place students at risk for arrest for routine misbehavior better handled by educators.

## **BACKGROUND**

Sadly, the Parkland massacre was not the first time Americans have been shocked by the news of a mass shooting at a school. Nineteen years ago, a mass shooting at Columbine High School garnered significant national attention to school security issues. Following Columbine, the federal government allocated millions of dollars to bolster programs for school resource officers (“SROs”)—the term commonly used to describe police officers who work in schools—around the country.<sup>1</sup> Approximately \$800 million was disseminated to fund the hiring of thousands of SROs.<sup>2</sup>

This increased deployment of SROs transformed the role of law enforcement officers in schools. Before Columbine, it was typical for police to arrive at schools only when called in response to emergencies. But the expansion of SRO programs meant that it became routine for police officers to patrol school hallways, cafeterias, and schoolyards. According to data collected by

the U.S. Department of Education and analyzed by Education Week, 44,000 part-time and full-time onsite law enforcement officers were present in the nation's schools.<sup>3</sup> Black and Latino high school and middle school students are likely than white and Asian students to attend schools with law enforcement officers.<sup>4</sup>

Remarkably, this surge in law enforcement in schools has occurred without any rigorous research suggesting that the presence of law enforcement reduces school violence.<sup>5</sup> To the contrary, the available studies reveal that an increased law enforcement presence leads to the criminalization of minor misbehavior. A study of data from the US Department of Education's 2009-2010 School Survey on Crime and Safety found that the presence of SROs increased the likelihood of students being referred to law enforcement for low level offenses.<sup>6</sup> Another review of data found a correlation between an increased law enforcement presence and increased reports of non-serious offenses.<sup>7</sup>

Research also shows that there are substantial racial disparities in school disciplinary practices—including referral to law enforcement and arrest. A report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office last month confirms that racial disparities in school disciplinary practices start in pre-school.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, black and Latino children are more likely to be subjected to arrest by law enforcement agents in schools. Data collected by the US Department of Education in 2013-2014 is revealing: "While black students represent 16% of student enrollment, they represent 27% of students referred to law enforcement and 31% of students subjected to school-related arrest. In comparison, white students represent 51% of enrollment, 41% of students referred to law enforcement, and 39% of those arrested."<sup>9</sup> This disparate treatment may be attributable to black children, especially black boys, being viewed as less innocent and older than their white peers,<sup>10</sup> particularly by police officers.<sup>11</sup>

## **POLICE IN SCHOOLS AND THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE**

The reasons that the mere presence of law enforcement agents lead to higher arrest levels are complex. The primary theory is that law enforcement officers tend to define misbehavior as criminal when educators would not. Once officers roam school hallways, they encounter misbehavior that could be classified as criminal. For example, if they see students engaging in horseplay in a cafeteria, they might classify it as disorderly conduct. This is not merely theoretical -- students have been arrested for misbehavior as minor as throwing a paper airplane and releasing "fart spray" in class, both classified as assault.<sup>12</sup>

The harms of unnecessary arrests in school are significant. It is traumatizing for anyone to be perp-walked and detained, but the pain and humiliation of being handcuffed are exacerbated for young people. Moreover, being arrested in school increases the likelihood that a student will drop out of high school.<sup>13</sup> And, unsurprisingly, when youth are ultimately incarcerated, there are significant adverse impacts on their future opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

Arrests in school and the harms that flow from them are particularly likely to unfold when there is confusion about the role of law enforcement officers in schools. A recent example of such role confusion occurred in Collingswood, New Jersey, when a school called the police in response to a third grader's an allegedly racially insensitive remark at a school party. According to news

reports, the school administration believed contacting the police was necessary because the Camden County Prosecutor's Office had previously instructed the school staff that a Memorandum of Agreement between the school district and law enforcement agencies required the school to call law enforcement whenever any incident could be considered criminal occurred.<sup>15</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Collingswood community responded with outrage to the interrogation of a third grader about a comment concerning brownies.

It is noteworthy that the Collingswood Memorandum of Agreement requiring the reporting of any potential crime was required by state policy. The Department of Law and Public Safety and Department of Education have issued a uniform memorandum of agreement (the "Uniform MOA") that school districts are prohibited from altering in important ways.<sup>16</sup> The current version of the Uniform MOA, which was most recently updated in 2015, is of concern because of both issues that it addresses and does not address.

### **THE UNIFORM MOA**

First, the Uniform MOA's reporting requirement is significant. It provides that a designated school official "should notify" law enforcement "whenever any school employee develops reason to believe that a criminal offense has been committed on or against school grounds."<sup>17</sup> Our criminal laws are incredibly broad. As noted above, there is little misbehavior that could not be characterized as criminal. The experience in Collingswood demonstrates how broadly that language can be read and the risk it creates for arrest or interrogation by law enforcement agents.

In addition, the Uniform MOA's silence as to the role of law enforcement agents in responding to routine misbehavior should be corrected. The Uniform MOA details the procedures that should be followed in various circumstances, such as when searches take place, but fails to specify which matters fall under the purview of law enforcement and which should be handled by educators alone. The same is true of law enforcement tactics, such as handcuffing and other uses of force.

The Uniform MOA's failure to require school districts to keep track of law enforcement activities in schools is also problematic. Schools measure all manner of activities but usually fail to track and publicize law enforcement activities. Given the substantial risk of harm because of law enforcement tactics in schools, school districts that hire SROs and other security personnel should be required to collect data about their activities. Specifically, the Uniform MOA should require school districts that utilize law enforcement officers to collect data on the number of officers deployed to schools, arrests, uses of handcuffs and other restraints, and uses of force. To ensure transparency, the Uniform MOA should further require annual reporting of these data.

When school districts choose to invite law enforcement officers into schools, they risk disrupting a positive school climate where all children can thrive. The mere presence of law enforcement agents has been shown to transform routine instances of misbehavior into criminal events, particularly for black and Latino students. To ensure that concerns about school security do not result in unintended consequences, the safeguards outlined above should be established.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the New Jersey Legislature require the Department of Law & Public Safety and Department of Education to update the required Memorandum of Agreement with the following guidelines:

1. Prohibit police intervention in instances of routine student misbehavior;
2. Prohibit the use of handcuffs on students unless there is a threat to physical safety;
3. Require school districts that utilize law enforcement officers to collect and report data on the number of officers deployed to schools regularly, arrests conducted in schools, uses of handcuffs or other restraints, and uses of force against students.

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service, *School Resource Officers: Law Enforcement Officers in Schools* (June 26, 2013) at 7 [hereinafter Congressional Research Service Report].

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Evie Blad & Alex Harwin, *Black Students More Likely to Be Arrested at School*, Ed Week (Jan. 24, 2017) (<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/01/25/black-students-more-likely-to-be-arrested.html>).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Research Service Report at 9.

<sup>6</sup> Jason P. Nance, *Students, Police, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline*, 93 Wash. U. L. Rev. 919, 976 (2016).

<sup>7</sup> Chongmin Na & Denise C. Gottfredson, *Police Officers in Schools: Effects on School Crime and the Processing of Offending Behaviors*, Justice Quarterly 1, 24 (2011). Studies of individual school districts reached similar results. Matthew T. Theriot, *School Resource Officers and the Criminalization of Student Behavior*, 37 Journal of Criminal Justice 280, 285 (2009); Aaron Kupchik, *Homeroom Security* (2011).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Discipline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities* (Mar. 22, 2018), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/690828.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, *Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snapshot: School Discipline*, Issue Brief No. 1 (Mar. 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Phillip Atiba Goff et al., *The Essence of Innocence: Consequences of Dehumanizing Black Children*, 106 Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 526 (2014); Rebecca Epstein et al., *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood* (2017) at 11.

<sup>11</sup> Kristin Henning, *Boys to Men: The Role of Policing in the Socialization of Black Boys*, in *Policing the Black Man* at 57 (Angela J. Davis ed., 2017).

<sup>12</sup> ACLU, *Bullies in Blue* (2017), <https://www.aclu.org/report/bullies-blue-origins-and-consequences-school-policing>.

<sup>13</sup> Gary Sweeten, *Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement*, 23 Justice Quarterly 462 (2006).

<sup>14</sup> Nance, *Students, Police, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline*.

<sup>15</sup> Emma Platoff, *Why police were called to a South Jersey third-grade class party*, philly.com (June 29, 2016)

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([http://www.philly.com/philly/education/20160629\\_Why\\_police\\_were\\_called\\_to\\_a\\_South\\_Jersey\\_third\\_grade\\_class\\_party.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/education/20160629_Why_police_were_called_to_a_South_Jersey_third_grade_class_party.html)).

<sup>16</sup> The MOA is available at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/law/moa/>.

<sup>17</sup> Uniform MOA ¶ 4.13.

# **Seven Lessons in the Prevention of School Violence and Aggression<sup>i</sup>**

Testimony before the New Jersey House & Senate Education Committees

Newark, New Jersey

March 23, 2018

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School violence is not a new concern and ineffective quick and short-term solutions have been repeatedly proposed. In 1994 (five years before the rampage shooting at Columbine High School), Congressional leaders were so optimistic and confident in their abilities to rid our schools of violence that they set an educational goal stating that “every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol...”

In response to Columbine, two federally supported research initiatives on targeted school shootings were undertaken, one by the FBI and one jointly conducted by the Department of Education and the Secret Service. This research was followed by an unprecedented number of research studies on school violence and the evaluation of school-based violence prevention strategies.

In my brief comments today, I will outline, in the form of seven lessons, some of what we have learned about school violence and the promotion of student well-being. I will not address guns in my remarks but would be glad to answer any questions about strategies to reduce gun violence.

I do want to note here that schools are relatively safe: firearm homicides in restaurants are ten times more frequent than in schools and 200 more frequent in homes and apartments. I urge everyone who supports metal detectors and armed security officers in schools to ask themselves whether they would want these measures implemented in their favorite restaurant. Moreover, for every shooting in schools, there are approximately 1,600 shootings outside of schools, primarily in

our most oppressed urban neighborhoods. Violence is not confined to our schools and violence outside of our schools affects the nature and dynamics of violence inside our schools, i.e., no school is an island onto itself.

**First Lesson:** Schools vary enormously in the nature, extent, and dynamics of violence perpetration and victimization. Consequently, there is no one-size fits all prevention manual.

The first step in any prevention effort requires assessments of the epidemiology of aggression and violence within each school: feelings of safety and fear, the nature and dynamics of each school's social and academic climate (see chart of the 5 fundamental dimensions of school climate on page 6), and specification of the types and frequencies of aggression and violence that need to be addressed. By far the best methodology to obtain such information is through anonymous student and staff self-report surveys. Reviews of pertinent school-based policies should also be undertaken. There are several existing user-friendly and low-cost ways to collect and analyze these data and prepare straightforward reports that elucidate the findings. In addition, given that all schools exist in the context of neighborhoods, data on the neighborhood stressors such as economic burdens, crime, police-community relationships, as well as the positive resources available in each community, should be gathered to supplement the in-school epidemiology data<sup>ii</sup>. Teachers and administrators who understand these facts about the neighborhoods in which their schools are embedded and something about the out-of-school experiences of their students, are better equipped to understand and respond to the needs of students in their schools. Community Schools, in which local neighborhood organizations and parents participate in school activities, skill development, and provide positive avenues for student engagement, also serve the bridge the invisible boundaries between school and community.

The results of such data-gathering and synthesis should be reviewed by teams of teachers, students, counselors, administrators, parents, and community leaders in order to identify and respond to the most pressing needs of each school. Effective school-based violence prevention strategies are widely available and can be tailored to the needs and priorities of each school.

**Second Lesson:** Despite the variations among schools, we do know that a positive school climate, particularly one that promotes norms of caring and respect, is essential to reducing student violence, aggression, bullying, and fears.

Research over the past decade has revealed that specific aspects of school climate are critically important in promoting safety, including but not limited to school attachment or bonding, connectedness among students and staff, and fair and consistently applied rules. Moreover, effective strategies to promote these aspects of school climate are widely available.

Connection promotes trust: the study by the Department and Education and Secret Service revealed that 81 percent of student shooters told someone in advance about their plans and 93 percent told their peers. Since that finding and the enhanced focus on building trust among students and staff, numerous school shootings have been averted by students feeling safe enough to tell a school staff member.

**Third Lesson:** Social-Emotional intelligence and skills are as important to healthy development as academic achievement and physical health.

Numerous research-based social/emotional skills programs are available throughout the k-12 spectrum. Not only do these programs increase skill levels and promote positive norms, they also improve academic engagement and achievement.

**Fourth Lesson:** Serious emotional problems experienced by students are complex and can usually be identified prior to such students harming themselves or others.

First developed in the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, lists of so-called early warning signs have been tested and validated. For example, when a teacher observes a student who is behaving in a pattern that is significantly different from his/her past behavior, the teacher or a counselor should privately and non-judgmentally inquire about what is going on. Such warning signs, in the vast majority of cases, are not predictive of future aggression and violence, but do indicate that something is awry in the life of such students. That “something” needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. Uncovering prior and current stressors and trauma and treating them effectively are essential. If not addressed, such problems and distress can escalate, isolation and shame increase, and healthy

development can be impaired. When schools take the easy road out by suspending or expelling students who are exhibiting troublesome behavior, the students' problems worsen, often with disastrous results. Out-of-school suspension and expulsions supported by zero tolerance policies should only be used in very extreme situations. On the other hand, all staff can be trained in the basics of responding to grief, trauma, and emotional stress by providing what some have called psychological first-aid. To the extent that teachers, administrators, and other staff respond in caring, supportive, and thoughtful ways, the more students will be willing to talk, and, when needed, be more willing to seek further treatment. The need for enhanced capacity to provide such help, training, and counseling is absolutely critical, and in the end, is much, much less costly than fancy security equipment, something that benefits those manufacturing such equipment far more than students<sup>iii</sup>.

**Fifth Lesson:** Threats of violence or self-harm must be investigated with research-validated procedures in order to establish the seriousness and viability of the threat.

Work at several universities have developed and elucidated the essential, safest, and effective threat assessment processes and procedures. A school safety team, including law enforcement and mental health professionals, and initial and ongoing training in threat assessment must be conducted to ensure that the processes are consistent with the most current thinking and research. See for example the work of Dewey Cornell at the University of Virginia<sup>iv</sup>.

**Sixth Lesson:** In the aftermath of tragedies like Parkland and elsewhere, mental health professional who are knowledgeable and experienced in treating trauma must be available for the long-term for all affected.

Researchers have developed effective trauma treatment approaches for a variety of traumas and populations, as well as programs within schools. A list of mental health providers who are knowledgeable and experienced in treating trauma should be identified prior to any serious incidents so that all can access such treatment when needed.

**Seventh Lesson:** Student voice and activism is essential in making schools safer.

Throughout history, young people have fueled positive change and progress at multiple levels of our society. All of the major change movements in the United States and elsewhere would have failed without the partnership, leadership, and energy of youth, including but not limited to the Civil Rights, anti-poverty, LGBTQ, anti-war, and feminist Movements. Well before the March for Our Lives, student-led groups such as the Philadelphia Student Union, the Advancement Project, and Youth for Justice have effectively vocalized and presented solution-based strategies to redress inequities and discrimination in their lives. Young people are the experts in their lived lives and to not use that knowledge is, well, stupid and wrong-headed. Furthermore, when given the opportunity and guidance, young people can serve as full partners in how we go about making our schools safer and more equitable; and they can push our legislators to “do the right thing.” Moreover, a growing body of literature reveals that engagement in the issues that are most important to young people results in substantially better developmental and academic outcomes.

Thank you. I certainly can provide resources, literature, and guidance should you wish.

## Dimensions and Components of School Climate

OVERALL DIMENSION	COMPONENTS
School Attachment	<p>School Connectedness, Commitment to School, Belonging (emotional bond to school), Investment in School, Bonding to School, School Spirit, Commitment to School.</p> <p>Includes behavioral aspects of participation as well as feelings about schools.</p>
Justice/Safety	<p>Fair and Justice Rules, Feeling Safe, Rules Consistently Applied and Fairly Enforced, Feels Socially and Emotionally Safe &amp; Secure in School</p>
Contribution	<p>Contribution: Student Involvement in Creation of Rules, Student Voice Listened &amp; Responded to, Student Opportunities to Contribute, Collaborative Orientation</p>
<p>Interpersonal Relationships (peer to peer) (peer to teacher) (teacher to teacher) A. Social-Emotional B. Academic</p>	<p>A. Attachment To, Positive Feelings About, Social and Emotional Support From, Friendships, Ethos of Caring</p> <p>B. Academic Support from Teachers, Staff, Administration, Peers, High and Reasonable Academic Expectations</p>
Physical Setting	<p>Feelings about Physical Environment, e.g., design, walls, heat, layout, and physical structure</p>

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<sup>i</sup> Please see the Congressional Briefing on School Violence hosted by the National Prevention Science Coalition and organized by Dr. Greene on March 23, 2018: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?442989-1/capitol-hill-forum-focuses-gun-violence-school-safety>.

<sup>ii</sup> Ruiz, Linda D., McMahon, Susan D., & Jason, Leonard A. The Role of Neighborhood Context and School Climate in School-Level Academic Achievement. *American Journal of Community Psychology* and McCoy, Dana Charles, Roy, Amanda L., & Sirkman, Gabriel M. (2013). Neighborhood Crime and School Climate as Predictors of Elementary School Academic Quality: A Cross-Lagged Panel Analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 52(1-2), 128-140.

<sup>iii</sup> See Tanner-Smith, E.E., Fisher, B.W., Addington, L.A., & Gardella, J.H. (2018). Adding Security, but Subtracting Safety? Exploring Schools' use of Multiple Visible Security Measures. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 43, 102-119. And Fisher, B.W., Mowen, T.J., & Boman, J.H. (2018). School security measures and longitudinal trends in adolescents' experiences of victimization. *Youth and Adolescence*, 2018 (e-Pub).

<sup>iv</sup> The Virginia Threat Assessment Model:

[https://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/Virginia\\_Model\\_for\\_Student\\_Threat\\_Assessment\\_overview\\_paper\\_7-16-10.pdf](https://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/Virginia_Model_for_Student_Threat_Assessment_overview_paper_7-16-10.pdf)

**School Safety Hearing – New Jersey Assembly Education Committee**  
**April 22, 2018**  
**Lincoln Maikos, 4<sup>th</sup> grader**  
**Indian Hill Elementary School, Holmdel, New Jersey**

Good afternoon Chairwoman and member of the Committee. My name is Lincoln Maikos and I'm a 10 year old 4<sup>th</sup> grader in Holmdel. In 8 years, I will be able to vote, but until then, I can use my voice to create change.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 – the day after my 7<sup>th</sup> birthday – my elementary school received a threat of an active shooter. At the time, I didn't know this. I, like my classmates, thought this was just a really, really long drill. We had to shelter in place for what felt like hours. Then, police came in, with guns, and told us to evacuate the building, and take a long walk to the edge of the school property. When we got there, eventually, our teacher told us to head toward the buses that were waiting outside the front of the school. Then, the buses left the property and drove to a quiet place while we waited for the police to confirm the building was safe.

I didn't know everything that was going on, but I understand now that my mom, and other parents, were waiting in a nearby park. They could see us on the buses and probably wanted to sweep in and take us home, to make sure we were safe. But, they couldn't.

Of course, we were all okay. Again, we were young and most of us just thought this was a drill. But, it was also just the first of almost a dozen incidents like this that school year. Regularly, our school, and other schools in our town, received threats of active shooters.

Each threat required us to follow lock-down procedures. Each drill took us away from valuable class time. And each drill caused at least a little bit of panic for my parents and the parents of my friends.

I know that I am lucky – we were just the victims of swatting calls. While it was disruptive and a little scary, no one was harmed. But, one day the call could be real. And now I'm older and understand more, about the world, about guns, about policy, and about my right to be safe in school.

There are two main thing that I would like to share with you today.

1. I know most students my age didn't participate in any school walk outs but I'm thankful for the older students who are speaking up to keep schools safer for everyone. But, some students are being told to walk *up*, rather than walk *out*. Walk up to ostracized students. The idea that by walking up, we'll keep ourselves safe from gun violence. I agree that we should treat everyone with kindness and respect, which I do, but *not* doing so doesn't make me responsible for someone's decision to bring a gun to school. I am not responsible for the crimes committed against me. I am a kid – attending school – I need adults to keep me safe!
2. Some people, including the President, have talked about teachers having guns. I couldn't disagree more! If the point is to get guns *out* of school, why hand them out to be brought inside? How am I supposed to focus on getting an education when I'm worried about who can access the teacher's gun?

This is a complicated issue, but as a child and as a student, I appreciate everyone who is working hard to keep me, and my friends safe in school. Thank you for letting me join you here today.

Good afternoon Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Lampitt and members of the Senate and Assembly Education committee. My name is Caitlyn Dempsey, and I am a senior at Randolph High School.

First of all, thank you so much for having all of us here. I am extremely honored to be able to address you today, so thank you for the invitation.

What I've done with this testimony is collect a number of experiences from various teachers and students who attend my school. I really want to stress that these small stories come together to encompass one large American story; as I have my own opinions regarding the issue of gun violence and gun culture in education, I feel that in order to express the true state of New Jersey and the country as a whole, I had to show you the entire problem from multiple perspectives. Each of these moments are real; each of them happened to normal, New Jersey citizens, and as a result I conclude that this is the individual impact of gun violence in America.

A few weeks ago, in a dark room as my class cowered in the corner, we were taught how to avoid getting sprayed with bullets if a shooter were to break a window. We were given tips on throwing projectiles at the perpetrator. I was in calculus. I should've been learning derivatives and integrals

Kids debate if they should jump out of a window and risk death or broken bones, or stay in the classroom if they were accosted by a shooter.

Teachers have to decide if they should throw themselves in front of students.

Teachers consider what it would mean for them if they had to be trained to use firearms.

This is what it's like to be educated in America.

We are being prepared for war.

Because at the base of it, that is what our society is doing. Our children, from Kindergarten to High School are battle ready.

And we should angry about that. This is our future. Our lives are on the line. These teachers, the people we look up to and trust, their lives are on the line.

I challenge you to consider how afraid we are. This is not a joke, a ploy, a means to get something done. This is a real, tangible fear that we feel every single day. We talk about it at lunch. In class. On the bus. This is not only a public health phenomenon, but a cultural phenomenon. We have perpetuated an atmosphere of fear, in which the very education system that creates the future is falling apart. At the first school shooter drill after Parkland, several students had panic attacks. The administration made it very clear that this was a drill, but the

sheer terror was still there. When we had our first fire drill after Parkland, kids did not want to leave the building. When 11 guns were stolen from a shooting range in my town, kids did not show up to school. And for those of us that did, we waited anxiously at every single bell and listened for the announcement that many of us thought was coming. There is simply no sense of security left.

This is what it's like to be educated in America. And there's something wrong with that.

As a result, the youth of this state have become a force to be reckoned with. However, the assertion that this is a recent movement is incorrect. We have been begging for this since Sandy Hook. Since Columbine. We're done begging.

A good friend of mine recently reminded me that we have been learning that actions speak louder than words since Kindergarten. So we walked out. So we've written our congressmen. So we planned Marches.

Now that is what it should be like to be educated in America. Kids standing up for what they believe in, creating a better future for themselves and the next generation.

Saying goodbye to my parents in the morning should not feel like the last time I could ever speak to them. Thinking of ways to escape the building at every classroom is not helping our scores, our GPAs, or our intellectual curiosity grow. If you want to see real progress, and genuinely care about the academic environment in New Jersey please consider this. I know we have some of the strongest gun legislation in the country, and I am grateful for that as are many students.

However, the sense of security is not there due to the events I have described: robbery of the shooting range, the proximity of Pennsylvania, the possibility of gun shows. I would urge you to consider implementing a metal detector program, or increasing the frequency of training for what to do if there were a school shooting including adding mandatory Stop the Bleeding kits in New Jersey schools. If there is any way for the New Jersey legislature and assembly to pressure our neighbors to consider stronger gun legislation, this would also be an incredible step towards fighting the fear culture that has been created. I know these are short term solutions, but until the gun show loophole, and our neighboring states legislation has been improved I believe this to be a viable option for fostering a better learning environment for New Jersey schools.

Thank you.

⑪ Dempsey page 2

Bella Bhimani, testimony, State Senate and Assembly Education Committees, 4/23/18

Good afternoon, Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Lampitt, members of the senate education committee, and members of the assembly education committee My name is Bella Bhimani, and I'm sophomore at West Morris Mendham High School, and I was the lead student organizer of the March For Our Lives Morristown. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to talk about school safety.

I'm here on behalf of the students who have been silenced for too long, who have been told that their voice doesn't matter, because we're "too young". But, as Trevor Noah said, "if kids are old enough to get shot then they're old enough to have an opinion about being shot". Because that is the reality. I'm only 16. I was born after Columbine and I've never known a world without school shootings. I've been having lockdown drills since kindergarten. Growing up we live with the fear EVERY DAY that one day we might walk into school and never come out. A fear that has only gotten worse -- something that no student, or any person should ever have to worry about. When the last major school shooting happened in Sandy Hook, I had only just turned 11. It's not that I didn't care, because I was, obviously, upset. But I knew that as a 5th grader I didn't have the power to do anything. Because we live in a world where we are taught growing up that "the adults will handle it". We expect that the president and all of our legislators will do their job and when there is a problem they will actually do something about it. However, as we have grown up, we've realized that that is not the case. If we want change to happen we have to make it happen ourselves. One of my favorite Gandhi quotes is, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." And that is why I am here today. We are the ones affected and we are the only ones willing to fix this.

Another thing that I want to address the preconceived notion that we are trying to take away all guns, which is not the case. Because at least once a week someone says "You're violating our second amendment right" or that we're just some crazy kids trying to take away your guns. And there are just so many things wrong with that. First of all, none of us ever said we wanted no guns. All we want is to make the world safer, which is something I think everyone can agree. Something that we truly believe can be accomplished through stricter gun regulations.

New Jersey already has some of the strictest gun laws in the country but on a federal level, what we are asking for is stricter background checks (especially mental health screening), raising the age limit of purchase, and a ban on assault rifles--weapons made for no reason other than to kill mass people, and are truly weapons of war. However, not only do we want to ban them, but we want a buyback program to get all assault rifles off the streets and out of the hands of people who can not handle them. And that being said, what makes your right to own a gun outweigh our right to live?

On a local level, arming teachers is not a solution. From preschool on up, one of the very first things you are taught is not to fight fire with fire. Yet now, to stop gun violence, we want to add more guns? Where is the logic in that? Arming teachers will not make anyone-- neither student nor teacher feel safer, and will only cause opportunities for more problems. And clear backpacks? That must be a joke. All that will do is make students feel more uncomfortable as it has now taken away their privacy. The way to stop gun violence and school shootings is not through these useless precautionary measures, but through major changes in federal legislation.

We may be young, but we are driven. And this is only the beginning. We will not stop until we are safe at school.

Thank you.

**Richard D. Tomko, Ph.D., M.J.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**  
**Belleville Public Schools**  
**Belleville, NJ 07409**

**The State Senate Education Committee and the Assembly Education Committee**  
**Final Hearing**  
**Monday, April 23, 2018 – 4 pm**

Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Lampitt, and Members of the New Jersey Senate and Assembly Education Committees:

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to speak before you and provide testimony for what I feel is arguably the most important topic in consideration of education today, and that is the safety of our children and those individual faculty members, professional staff, and administrators who serve them each and every school day. Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety<sup>1</sup> reported that the two top factors that limited schools' efforts to reduce or prevent crime "in a major way" included a lack of alternative placements or programs for disruptive students and inadequate school funding. As we all understand that funding is important in consideration of making our buildings safe, I strongly feel that there is no monetary amount that will keep any school building or office perfectly impenetrable. We can all invest in the necessary additions to our physical plants, alternative placements for those students who face serious infractions to the code of conduct, and discuss budgetary items to be fitted on doors and install modern surveillance throughout our hallways; however, it has become most important that there is an understanding that the only true deterrent of terroristic and harmful acts to our children and educational professionals in our schools is to have an acute awareness of potential threats and an ability to work together with all stakeholders to eradicate peril before it occurs.

I applaud the efforts of our state legislators for the passage of P.L. 2017 Ch. 162 and the subsequent training by the Department of Education and the Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning with regard to the implementation of the School Safety Specialist position. A position defined as such will encourage districts to articulate ideas, discuss concerns, and cultivate new methods to ensure that all New Jersey schools are current in consideration of the tools needed to protect our children and keep our schools safe. The Specialist position carries with it the ability to dialogue and network with other district Specialists as an assurance that every school can be afforded the opportunity to understand strategies from other districts that will help strengthen school safety, mitigate safety concerns through true-and-tried measures, and foster a statewide database of strategies and programs for districts to review and use. It is my professional opinion that this position must be utilized in this way and not seen as only an

individual administrator tasked with the duty of assuring that district drills and training are taking place, albeit an important task in consideration of and accountability for the training regimen that must be followed. In turn, the creation of the School Safety Specialist was a most appropriate first step in opening the dialogue to strengthen one of the most salient tenets found embedded within the mission of every school district which, of course, is school safety.

I can speak for the Essex County schools and more specifically, the Belleville Public Schools District when I report that there is constant articulation and communication between the Chief School Administrators and our County Executive Superintendent in consideration of school safety and actions taken to strengthen protocols and enhance programs in our communities with regard to our charge in ensuring school safety. As school superintendents, we wholly understand that the conversation on school security no longer ends with monthly safety drills and professional development to discuss lockdown procedures; rather, the safety of our students must be a consistent dialogue that includes all stakeholders within our communities.

This afternoon, I would like to share with you just a few of the best practices, programs, and preventative measures that I had the honor of helping to implement in my district to enhance the safety of our schools. As the Superintendent of Schools in the Belleville Public Schools District, the Board Trustees, administration, and I have always assured that the interests of our children and professional staff in consideration of school safety are of paramount importance. Working with our Director of Safety Services, we have developed a strategic plan and protocols to ensure that we continue to make a proactive contribution in the daily lives of our students, being ready to react to any situation with regard to school and student safety that may arise at any given moment.

First, our Safety Services Team. The Belleville Public Schools District employs 35, armed School Safety Officers who patrol our schools whenever students, faculty, and staff are present. We also have a Safety Services Cruiser that is used to patrol our schools during outside recess and respond to any school emergency or crisis situation. Since implementing this roving patrol earlier this school year, we have removed unauthorized persons from school lots; identified unknown individuals around school premises; and assisted police in recovering a student who left a building without permission. Most important, the roving patrol provides an awareness that our students are being monitored, acting as a deterrent for any unsavory individuals. Our officers are all retired law enforcement, and they have received training in the use of Narcan; Active Shooter; First Aid Response; and Handle With Care for dealing with students. This is not a group of security guards patrolling the hallways. Instead, the men and women who are the core of the Safety Services Team play an integral role throughout the school day, essentially becoming part of the faculty. These individuals work with our School Resource Officers to ensure a safe, academic environment while providing that familiar “face” for students, staff, and parents who grow to trust in these individuals each new school day. With the instincts of a

veteran police officer and an ability to know the needs of the individual children whom they serve, our Safety Services Officers play an active role in preventing incidents from occurring by having the true pulse of the school community. Our team of officers represents a cogent deterrent to any safety concerns through their prowess in identifying what seems “out of place” or identifying any “red flag” that may warrant further investigation, counseling and mediation services, and police involvement.

A second extremely important addition to the strategic safety plan is our district involvement with community policing as set forth by Belleville Police Chief, Mark Minichini. Over the past several years, we have worked together with our police department to establish greater communications and encourage that our juvenile, School Resource, and day shift officers are active in the day-to-day operations of the district. This includes frequent visits to all of our school sites; interactions with our students; involvement in all of our multicultural and wellness events; and implementing programs with regard to stranger awareness, traffic safety, and drug and alcohol prevention. On some days, you may find a Belleville Police Officer sitting with students during a lunch period or throwing a football outside. During a recent Safety Summit that we held for the Belleville community, Chief Minichini and I encouraged citizens to dialogue with administrators and police when spotting any suspicious activity, and department officials discussed the signs of an active shooter. In all, the increase in patrols and informal visits to schools by our men in women “in blue” have amassed a strong relationship and level of trust in consideration of our students and local law enforcement while growing the articulation between the administration, faculty, and police officials.

Working with our pupil personnel services team, the Board approved the creation of the High School Drop-In Center for the 2017-2018 school year. This has been a successful addition to our guidance and mediation programs, and the center offers students a confidential means to discuss and receive assistance for mental health issues and other adolescent concerns. What the Drop-In Center has also done is provide a safe haven and avenue for students to report potential conflicts and other concerns about students planning harm to themselves and others. During the first 5 months in operation, there were 1,284 student visits to the center which led to 98 referrals for outside evaluations including reports of students with social media posts that threatened student safety. The Drop-In Center continues to advance the open dialogue that has been established for our students, stigma free from fear of being outcast by peers for reporting safety concerns. This has been such a successful venture that the district will be implementing a Drop-In Center at Belleville Middle School beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.

Lastly, I am proud to share with you our district’s launch of the “See Something, Say Something” Campaign. Working together with the Belleville Education Association, the campaign stresses the importance of our students informing parents, teachers, and administrators when they see something out of place or someone who looks suspicious. The campaign also

works to remind our students not to open the outside doors for any visitor and to direct them to the main office. By creating this district-wide awareness, we have solidified the most important first step in maintaining safe schools – to identify the threat or problem before it becomes reality.

It is my professional opinion that we need to place the most emphasis on communicating and articulating with each other to ensure that we can identify and be proactive in mitigating potential safety concerns for our students and professionals within our school districts. Learning cannot occur unless we can provide a safe environment for our children. By providing an open dialogue and a manner in which students are encouraged to alert adults and other professionals to a potential safety crisis and even become respected by their peers in doing so, we continue to move in the right direction in resolving conflict and ultimately, saving lives.

In closing, I would like to thank the Honorable Chairpersons and members of the State Senate and Assembly Education Committees for maintaining your vigilance in this most important area that we face in education today. I implore each of you to keep asking the difficult questions in order that we continue to dialogue in finding solutions to ensuring that the New Jersey schools are at the forefront of keeping our children and their educators safe.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Diliberti, M., Jackson, M., and Kemp, J. (2017). Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2015–16 (NCES 2017-122). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC. Retrieved [date] from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>.

## **Special Joint Meeting of the Assembly and Senate Education Committee**

### **Topic: School Security**

*Rutgers University-Newark, Paul Robeson Campus Center*

*Monday, April 23, 2018*

**Testimony: Jordan Schiff, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools, Hillsborough Township**

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Lampitt and members of the committees. I am Jordan Schiff, Superintendent of the Hillsborough Public Schools, President of the Garden State Coalition and Legislative Chair of the New Jersey Association of School Superintendents. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Since the Parkland tragedy, much has been said and written about school security. It is on the minds of every school administrator, not to mention school staff, school board members, parents and students. We all have the same goal—to keep our children safe from school violence.

When other public and private institutions fall apart, the schools remain. We are highly visible public institutions at the hearts of our communities. Our unique mission and high profile make us uniquely capable and uniquely vulnerable.

That vulnerability has led us, in the years since Columbine and Sandy Hook, to forge closer relationships with local law enforcement, seek expert advice from public and private security entities and listen carefully to the concerns of our communities. Much of that effort was made at a time when education and educators in New Jersey have been systematically starved of the resources needed to maintain existing personnel and programs, let alone upgrade security.

Now we are called upon to increase school security once again. We will make every effort to do so, but we cannot do it alone. We appreciate Senator Sweeney's proposed statewide bond issue that includes one billion dollars of grant money for school security upgrades. If approved by the Assembly and signed by the Governor, it will be placed on the November ballot. If approved by the voters, it will most likely provide us help in FY '20. However, those are big "ifs." Public outcry, coupled with our own concerns for student safety, means that our districts need more immediate help. My suggestions are as follows:

- First, allow school districts to exceed the two percent tax levy cap for school security upgrades. This provision lets local boards of education prioritize security spending according to the specific circumstances of their districts and the concerns of their communities.
- Second, student mental health services are integral to school security. Funding provisions for security, whether in the form of cap waivers or additional aid, should include mental health services as allowable expenditures. Investments in mental health ARE investments in school security.

I want to stress this second recommendation. Our students face unprecedented levels of stress. Educators and mental health professionals across the nation have seen increases in depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation and attempts in the last few years. School districts should not have to choose between a teacher or a mental health professional, or between a teacher or a police officer. These times require us to do it all. I sincerely appreciate your time and attention. Thank you



*Testimony before the Joint Session of  
the Senate Education Committee and the Assembly Education Committee  
April 23, 2018*

*Respectfully submitted by:*

*David C. Hespe, Porzio Compliance Services, School Safety & Compliance Team  
James G. Mottola, Porzio Compliance Services, School Safety & Compliance Team  
Elizabeth M. Shea, Porzio Compliance Services, School Safety & Compliance Team*

Good afternoon. We would like to start by thanking Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Lampitt, and all of the Committee members for both your leadership in taking on this extremely important topic as well as for the opportunity to share some of our thoughts with you today. We will keep our comments brief, as we understand that there is a great deal of interest in this topic and you have a lot of people to hear from. We have included our contact information with our testimony and we are available to answer any questions and to continue this dialogue at a later date.

By way of background, we have been brought together from very different backgrounds by *Porzio Compliance Services, LLC* – a wholly-owned subsidiary of the law firm of Porzio, Bromberg & Newman, P.C. – for the express purpose of assisting our school and higher education clients in keeping school communities safe in both physical and cyberspace. In that capacity, we have recently launched a **School Safety and Compliance** initiative with the goal of integrating our experience in the areas of education, health care and human services, and threat mitigation to assist schools with creating safer environments and with managing threatening situations.

It is widely recognized that safety depends on a strong, coordinated, and fully articulated partnership among a wide range of sectors with diverse philosophies, priorities, and protocols. As with most threats, gaps in our defenses and planning provide the opportunity for unforeseen and unfortunate events to occur. The School Safety and Compliance team at *Porzio Compliance Services* is working to close these gaps; and that is the reason we are with you together today.

As the core members of Porzio's School Safety and Compliance team, we leverage our experience in three critical disciplines to assess physical, information, and compliance situations holistically.

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Our team includes:

**James (Jim) Mottola** - the former Special Agent in Charge of the Newark Office of the United States Secret Service, who focuses on assessments and solutions of threats related to physical and information security, and incident response planning.

**Dave Hespe** - the former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, who leverages his decades of experience in school safety planning, school management, and training.

**Liz Shea** - the former Assistant Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services, who brings twenty years of experience and knowledge of the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and how any comprehensive threat prediction scenario or safety review must be adapted to ensure their needs are included.

We would like to focus our testimony on three primary recommendations:

1. Any policies enacted to improve the security of our schools must take into consideration the practical implications of the unique issues that arise related to children with disabilities.
2. Safety planning has to be tuned in to the threats of the future, and not only those of the past.
3. We must strive to achieve a "Defense in Depth" approach to security.

#### **Recommendation 1: School Safety Initiatives for Children with Disabilities**

While this is certainly not the first time the need to include students with disabilities into safety planning has been raised, all too often, no actions or steps towards implementation are taken. This is likely the result of the fact that safety planning can be extremely overwhelming, and safety planning that is inclusive of the realities of individuals with disabilities can add a level of complexity that is daunting to execute.

As a result, students with disabilities and their families routinely report that they do not feel that they are appropriately considered in safety planning. In fact, students report the following:

- *"We did practice active shooter drills, but during the part where we were supposed to 'hide', I was just sitting there in my wheelchair, totally visible."*
- *"They told me that the plan would be to evacuate me if something happened, but we never practiced it. Not once."*
- *"I went to sit in my brother's autism class with him during the lockdown. I was able to keep him calm and quiet but I got in trouble for going there. They said it was against the rules. Well my question is: what was their plan to keep him quiet then?"*
- *"Our classroom is exempt from the drills. The teacher said it would take too much time."*



There are many very practical and real solutions that address how to incorporate the unique needs of students with disabilities into safety planning. And more often than not, the commitment is there. So we need to ask ourselves why comprehensive safety planning is failing these individuals. Based on our experience, there are two factors.

1. It takes time. By definition, you can't use a "one size fits all" approach which results in a more labor intensive process that requires more resources than are likely available.
2. A failure to include disability experts in the initial planning phase resulting in leaving special education teachers and classroom aides with the responsibility of "figuring it out" if anything happens. This over-reliance on those staff is misguided in that they often do not have the training or resources to manage an individual situation as it arises.

Action should be taken to ensure that safety policies and practices are strengthened to require disability expertise in planning around school safety, and to provide the resources the schools need to institute programs that account for all kids.

#### **Recommendation 2 – Plan for Future Threats**

Too often, schools and other institutions approach contingency planning only to account for scenarios we have seen in the past. Predictive planning should be the standard so that schools are thinking ahead of possible scenarios that would put students in jeopardy.

The seriousness of keeping students safe, managing compliance, and institutionalizing best practices may feel overwhelming to educators as they cope with the obligations placed on them. This burden is made more difficult by the unknown nature of many threats. Perpetrators, whether in physical or cyberspace, are constantly adapting and changing their approach based on information about their target, lessons from other crimes, and new technology. For this reason, it is never enough to base training on the factual circumstances surrounding past threats or to base our sense of preparedness on the situations that have happened in the past. Instead we must be able to assist school leaders in preparing for the challenges that lie ahead while allowing them to remain focused on student success today.

#### **Recommendation 3 – Defense in Depth Approach**

The effectiveness of any incident response and security plan, requires overlapping areas of responsibility to be defined and assigned to subject matter experts from the onset. While policies and recommendations provide a framework for a comprehensive approach, the often evolving physical security best practices are difficult for educators who are already low on resources to keep up with. The result is a failure to properly address an ever shifting threat picture, leaving critical areas of concern exposed within environments vulnerable to be exploited by those wishing to do harm.

A "Defense in Depth" or comprehensive approach to security requires the active engagement of educators, mental health professionals, and security experts to collectively identify threats and vulnerabilities through a



gap analysis. Then these gaps must be addressed in a proactive and adaptive manner, to better secure environments as part of risk mitigation strategy to reduce the likelihood and impact of violence in our schools.

In closing, when it comes to school safety and the inherent risks to our children's lives, due to the many internal and external factors which may be beyond our control, there is really no such thing as an "acceptable level of risk". When it comes to our children, nothing short of 100% success is acceptable. However, we live in a world where it seems violence in our schools is an almost daily occurrence. We have no choice but to take an approach of shared responsibility; parents, students, law enforcement officials and educators must work together to find practical solutions to provide our children with a safe school environment. This means that we must break down silos and work towards a goal that is greater than any one person or organization. The *Porzio Compliance Services* School Safety and Compliance Team's goal is to provide guidance to all stakeholders, based upon our shared expertise and resources to find those practical security solutions to any organizations that would welcome our assistance.

We are happy to answer any questions from the Committee members. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for your shared commitment to providing all students in New Jersey with safe and secure learning environments.

Contact us at:

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April 23, 2018

## Senate, Assembly Education Committees to Hold Joint Hearings on School Security

Hello, my name is Paul Van Houten, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important topic that is vital for the safety and security of the children and teachers in the schools of our great state. I have been a public educator for the past twenty-eight years having taught in elementary and middle school in Monroe Township, Gloucester County.

I remember nineteen years ago when the concern of school security began with the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. At that time, being in a elementary school setting, I was not fearful for my students' lives or that of my fellow educators. Nineteen years later I am more afraid for my students, my fellow educators, and myself than ever before. Since I have been an educator in the middle school setting my students and I have been exposed to many different experiences with violence and security concerns: such as students bringing weapons to school, students making bomb threats, lockdowns due to various reasons, social media threats, personal threats of violence from a students, and shelter in place due to a community episodes near the school.

For many years now I have served on our district's school safety committee to help with the flow of information to staff members, so that they would better understand the plans and their role in emergency situations to keep students and educators safe. This safety information used to be delivered in person during our inservice days, so that questions could be asked and input could be given that might improve the plan for the better if possible. Sadly, for the past five years our district had been in-servicing staff, on a myriad of mandatory topics, by way of internet videos. This has taken the person-to-person flow of information out of the equation. Staff members push play on the video and in five minutes it is done. No human communication. No questions. No input.

The school district and the local police department do not interact with the students and staff until something has gone wrong. There are backdoor communications between school administrators and police administrators however this information never filters down to the educators in the classrooms. Monroe Township has grown so quickly over the past ten years, and so many of the local police officers have retired, that there is now a disconnect between police and community members. In the past people knew the police officers names, car numbers, and families, but now the average person, student, and educator does not know the everyday police officer. That not knowing has begun to breed the "us against them" mentality. They have the information, so therefore they have the power.

In part I believe that there is a problem with the school authorities and police/township authorities who do not want to divulge information that my seem to be negative in nature about our town. I am not sure if they believe the community can't handle it, home values will decline, or that the school district will be labeled as dangerous district, but whatever the rationale is, it is

not helping the communities level of trust with any information that is given. This has killed the idea of see something say something. Staff are afraid to do this for fear that they will be labeled troublemakers or told that the information is private. Authorities have the attitude as "let us handle the situation. Your help is not required." And more police presence in schools simply means nothing if there is not a feeling of trust and understanding. It will just turn into authoritarian rule.

For example, in the past few months there have been multiple situations with students making threats of violence in person, and through social media, and the school district and the local police never reported these threats to the community. In contrast, other communities in the area HAVE reported their situations with no filter. The information was out there and the community could ask questions and discuss the situations with fellow community members, and even speak to their children as to what was going on to make the situation less stressful. I read recently that Governor Murphy and the Attorney General were updating on how and when threats are reported to be reported to authorities. Who is watching the watchers if the districts do not want to admit that there is a threat? Who gets to determine a level of threat and IF it gets reported? Where is the accountability? I know that many school districts report school violence and discipline in different ways in order to make the monthly state report look better than it really is. Are we sacrificing the safety of students and staff to make a school district look better? If so, then that is unconscionable. And should be illegal.

Some questions I still have going forward are how to get the powers that be to communicate accurate information in a timely manner to educators who need it the most, and how the powers that be are to be held accountable to the process without having to OPRA the information.

Our lives are depending on it.

Thank you.

*Senate Education Committee  
Assembly Education Committee*

*School Safety Hearing*

*April 23, 2018*

*Testimony by  
Raymond Sobieski  
Co-Founder  
Report It, LLC  
[rsobieski@reportit.com](mailto:rsobieski@reportit.com)  
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I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the very important topic of school safety.

Efforts to prevent crimes and address safety in our school communities are most effective when they involve strong collaboration between school administration, law enforcement partners and the students, families, and staff they serve.

After the 1999 killings at Columbine, the Department of Education and the Secret Service investigated 37 targeted school shootings and school attacks to determine if there was a common profile. The report concluded that in 30 of the 37 incidents, at least one person had information that the attacker was thinking about or planning the attack. In 28 of the 30, that person was a peer—a friend, schoolmate, or sibling. The study also found that school shootings are rarely impulsive acts. Rather, they are typically thought out and planned out in advance. Some peers knew exactly what the attacker planned to do; others knew something ‘big’ or ‘bad’ was going to happen, and in several cases knew the time and date it was to occur - but did not alert an adult. In addition, almost every attacker had engaged in behavior before the shooting that seriously concerned at least one adult - and for many had concerned three or more different adults.

### **Findings of the Safe School Initiative**

The findings of the Safe School Initiative suggest that there are productive actions that educators, law enforcement officials, and the community can take to help prevent targeted school violence. Specifically, the findings suggest that school and law enforcement officials should focus their efforts to formulate strategies in two principal areas:

- improving the capacity to acquire and evaluate available or knowable information that might indicate that there is a risk of an attack; and,
- employ the results of "threat assessments exercises," in developing strategies to prevent potential school attacks from occurring.

Other key findings included:

- Most attackers engaged in some behavior, prior to the incident, that caused concern or indicated a need for help.
- Most attackers were known to have difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures.
- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack.

The findings from the study suggest that some school attacks may be preventable, and that students can play an important role in prevention efforts.

I believe that one of the best ways to prevent school shootings and other acts of violence lie within the society of America's young people. Anonymous tips provide a safe, confidential way for students to alert authorities about information that may be useful in preventing school attacks, bullying, and suicidal behaviors. Tip lines are not new; police and government officials have long understood their value. They were widely used after the 1999 shootings at Colorado's Columbine High School, and received renewed interest from a handful of states and districts that sought to strengthen violence-prevention efforts following the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook and once again after the recent shootings at Parkland.

The difference today is that Tip lines are now rapidly becoming Digital Platforms and Apps. Nearly nine-in-ten Americans today are online and over three-quarters of Americans (77%) now own a smartphone.

According to a Pew Research study, Smartphones are nearly ubiquitous among younger adults. There has also been a 12-point increase in smartphone ownership among households earning less than \$30,000 per year: 64% of these lower-income Americans now own a smartphone.

This increase in smartphone ownership has led to a striking cultural and social change in the ways younger Americans communicate. Smartphone use has dramatically shifted the preferred

medium to texting, email and other apps that provide electronic communication choices. Kids speak in the language they know, that language is digital.

## **THE COMMUNITY'S ROLE**

Just as school officials and law enforcement have a role in the prevention of crime, members of the community also have a responsibility to contribute to safety. The responsibility to provide for the safety of our children does not end with the school day. We must extend this responsibility to include traveling to and from school as well as after school events. The community can help support law enforcement in these efforts by being aware of and reporting suspicious activity. Since students who are part of the community are more likely to initially notice changes in behavior or activity they should be encouraged to communicate their concerns. Information sharing efforts between the community and law enforcement, can help to ensure that these concerns are addressed, and increasing the likelihood of intervention and prevention.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's "See Something, Say Something™" campaign is an example of a simple and widely communicated program to raise public awareness and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper law enforcement authorities and security partners. Programs like "See Something, Say Something™" underscore the concept that an alert and engaged community plays a critical role in safety and security. Many K-12 schools have adopted such programs, yet they remain vastly underutilized.

The issue of retribution or self-incrimination may also play a role in students' reluctance to report suspicious activity. One step toward gaining trust and reducing retribution is to deploy anonymous 3<sup>rd</sup> party smartphone based reporting platforms. Anonymity allows school community members to contribute to safety without fear of retribution or self-incrimination.

## **report it® CAN HELP**

**report it®** is a mobile reporting solution that provides crowdsourcing capabilities to members of the school community. Utilizing Geo-Location technologies **report it®** helps determine proper jurisdiction over an incident. Combined with proprietary report routing and notification protocols, **report it®** makes sure that the information is accurately communicated in real time.

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In most case **report it®** can be deployed to a school in 7 days or less and at a cost as low as \$1.00 per student.

## SUMMARY

Today's school threat environment is complex requiring a more collaborative and integrated approach to safety, one in which the school community and law enforcement are adequately empowered and easily linked. Such horizontal linkages are critical to accessing and incorporating non-traditional sources of information and creating new partnerships with students, visitors, administration, staff and other community members to utilize their unique perspective and strengths.

Imagine an anonymous reporting app on a statewide or nationwide level.

The tools and cost to implement this app would be minimal; students already have the smartphones, they would just have download the app.

In a digital world, it only makes sense that the way we visualize safety can be digital too. We have the power now to use the technology available to us, to create safer classrooms across the country. With three-way communication between schools, students, and police easily accessible, we can see tighter knit communities that prevent tragedies such as Sandy Hook and Parkland from happening ever again.

What I'm suggesting is not a definitive way to end school violence. There are too many factors that are easy to talk about on paper but hard to see in reality. But I am suggesting that working together we can try something to prevent gun violence in our schools while we continue to explore other security measures.

I thank you for the opportunity to present my views on how we can all work together to help make our schools safe and secure.

Senate/Assembly Education Committees  
Public Testimony on School Security  
April 23, 2018  
Rutgers University-Newark  
Paul Robeson Campus Center-Essex Room  
350 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
Newark, NJ

Kevin M. Craig  
[REDACTED], Wantage, NJ 07461

Appointed Member- New Jersey School Security Task Force  
Director of Safety and Security, High Point Regional High School  
Chief of Police (Retired)- Jefferson Township Police Department

Thank you for taking the time to hear from members of the public regarding the important issue of school security. My name is Kevin Craig and I am a resident of Wantage, NJ in Sussex County. I am a retired NJ Police Chief, Director of Safety and Security at High Point Regional High School, Member of the NJ School Security Task Force, and father of four children. Since the Parkland, Florida school shooting, I have been inundated with calls, emails, conversations, and meetings related to the topic of school security. The overwhelming sentiment of these discussions is "how do we make our schools safe and protect our children so that this does not happen again?" The unfortunate answer is that there is no one single measure, policy, or technology that can guarantee this. There are, however recommended best practices that if implemented in every school, would significantly reduce incidents of violence and provide for the level of safety that we all seek. These recommendations have been made time after time by committees and task forces throughout the nation, including our state, in the aftermath of these tragic incidents.

I recall the feeling of absolute devastation and shock that I felt along with fellow community members five years ago after the horrific tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Similarly, I recall a flurry of activity, including calls, emails, conversations, and meetings with the same "what can we do?" questions. In the immediate aftermath of Sandy Hook, like similar tragedies that preceded it, there were after action reviews, the NJ SAFE Task Force, The NJSBA, Task Force, and the legislatively created NJ School Security Task Force convened and charged with making recommendations to address the issue of school safety and security. These task forces met and deliberated for months to put forth recommendations to address these issues. The recommendations, which were arrived at after much deliberation and review by experts in law enforcement, homeland

security, education, and mental health touch on a wide array of issues that contribute to school violence and how to best prevent, respond to, and recover from these incidents.

The NJ School Security Task Force issued its final report and recommendations in July of 2015 after much anticipation. These recommendations touched on many issues still being discussed after Parkland including behavioral threat assessment, crisis communication, stationing police in schools, access control, target hardening, and cyber security among others. As a member of the task force it was encouraging to see legislative movement on several of the recommendations in 2016 and 2017, however I believe that the State of NJ needs to continue to pursue the remaining recommendations of this task force to ensure that we are providing the safest possible environment for our school communities. While continued public meetings and community discussion are valuable platforms, true change will only come through action. Adequate resources also need to be allocated to enable schools to pursue these measures and mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure compliance.

It is my hope that our elected officials will again review the recommendations put forth in the final Task Force report and recommendations from 2015 and other available resources and take affirmative steps to move on these recommendations before we are faced with the next unspeakable tragedy.

It is also my hope that we as a state can initiate real change and set an example for the rest of the nation so that we may finally say "never again" and truly mean it. Thank you for your time and consideration and for your service to our state.

**Testimony of Marian Raab to the Joint Senate and Assembly  
Committee on Education regarding school safety on April 23, 2018.**

**Marian Raab  
Maplewood-South Orange Organizer  
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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony. My name is Marian Raab and I'm a local organizer for Save our Schools NJ representing the Townships of Maplewood and South Orange. Save our Schools NJ is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization of 34,000 parents and other concerned state residents who believe that *all* Garden State children should have access to a high-quality public education.

Volunteer organizers like myself work hard to keep legislators, like yourselves, as well as the community informed about issues and legislation that directly affect our children's education, both locally and at the state level. Since my two children started kindergarten, they have been enrolled in the Maplewood-South Orange school district. William is currently a freshman at Columbia High School and Ethan will graduate from 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the Tuscan Elementary School in June.

I served for many years as a parent volunteer and then the chair of the Tuscan School Safety Committee. While on the committee, I met weekly with a uniformed liaison from the Maplewood Police Department to discuss school safety concerns ranging from school security to traffic calming in front of the building. Here's the most important thing I learned from those years: The best way to improve school safety is to *prevent* situations that can lead to tragedies from ever starting in the first place.

Talking about preventing tragedies, I would like to personally thank you, your colleagues in the legislature and Governor Phil Murphy for recently passing much-needed common-sense gun regulations in New Jersey following the horrific event earlier this year at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

I sincerely hope we can all agree arming public school teachers is a terrible idea and the vast majority of NJ residents as well as teachers do NOT support it—especially when doing so would drain millions of dollars from our already cash-strapped school budgets.

Strong, common-sense gun regulation is clearly an important method to prevent school shootings and improve school safety. The other way is to prevent students from reaching a crisis point is by providing comprehensive mental and emotional support services—especially to at-risk students. We must focus *less* on having 1<sup>st</sup> graders practicing hiding in a coat closet for a “Code Red-Active Shooter” drill and focus more on how we can prevent violence and violent acts from taking place in our schools in the first place.

Three years ago in Maplewood, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader brought a 9mm loaded glock handgun into school inside of his backpack. Police reported that the gun was loaded with hollow point bullets (also known as “cop killer” bullets). On that day, my then 11-year-old 6<sup>th</sup> grade son was crouched under a desk in his language arts classroom for over two hours during an actual code red while law enforcement brought bomb sniffing dogs into the school to ensure that there were no other explosives in the building.

As difficult as it may be, we must ask ourselves why? Why would a 7<sup>th</sup> grader feel the need to bring a loaded handgun into his middle school? What happened that year to cause this child to feel he needed to bring a gun to school?

But how can we expect school guidance counselors to do even the basic elements of their jobs when we have districts where the ratio between guidance counselor and student can range anywhere from anywhere from 200 to 800 to ONE?

We must increase funding to increase the number of guidance counselors and other school mental health professionals going forward. Please don't wait for another Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy to happen in New Jersey.

There is another area in our schools that I urge you to consider when it comes to improving school safety and student mental health issues: A school library is the largest classroom in most buildings. School libraries and the certified librarians who run them offer a place where all students --

no matter their race, sexuality, gender or religion – can feel comfortable and free to be themselves. Certified librarians have the knowledge to put the right book in a troubled student's hands and help them realize they are not alone. Indeed, one New Jersey middle school librarian I know told me this past weekend that she spends most of her time being available in the library and providing support—both educational and emotional—to her students.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hold this hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify. Have a good afternoon.

**BETTY LEE DAVIS, PH.D., LCSW**

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Good Afternoon New Jersey Senate Education Committee and General Assembly Education Committee:

I am Dr. Betty Lee Davis, and I thank you for the opportunity to be here today to speak out for the youth of the State of New Jersey and call for a *trauma-informed, universal safe, quality education* throughout the State as an essential in providing school security in response to most recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida, as one in a series of school shootings that have plagued this country for over twenty years.

I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at the Ph.D. level with many years of experience working with children, adolescents, and their families in a variety of behavioral health settings and a range of capacities, including a number of years previously at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, and for the past thirteen years, providing in-home behavioral health services to children, adolescents and their families in New Jersey through the Department of Child and Family Behavioral Health. During the past eleven years, I have provided grief support and other services to Mothers In Charge, a violence prevention, advocacy organization composed of mothers and others who have lost a loved to violence in the City of Philadelphia, which is where my career exposure to the effects of violence and evolving career focus on posttraumatic stress disorder began. Among other chapters across the country, Mothers in Charge has a chapter in New Jersey in Atlantic City. After providing what might be considered *palliative* care to those suffering the anguish that accompanies homicidal grief and advocating for violence prevention, I came to see education advocacy as the natural, next step for me in supporting those who had lost a loved one to homicide.

Testimony Introduction

In July, 2011, I, as a member of the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches Education Committee, was asked by its Chair to provide testimony on trauma and education at the Pennsylvania House Education Committee Information Hearings. That testimony provided the clinical underpinnings for what became, in April, 2013, Pennsylvania House Resolution 191 (Appendix A) declaring youth violence as a public health epidemic and supporting the establishment of Statewide trauma-informed education. It was adopted with full bi-partisan support. Within months, the Resolution's sponsor took it to the National Conference of State Legislators and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators where it received unanimous adoption by both bodies. In that testimony, I reconceptualize youth violence from a law enforcement problem to a *medical* problem, posttraumatic stress disorder. applied it to the community level, and in a subsequent testimony (August, 2011), called on the public health community to intervene using its epidemiological approach. Since that time, I have become highly engaged as an activist in Pennsylvania and at the national level providing testimony and

making public comment advocating for youth violence to be treated as a public health epidemic and the establishment of trauma-informed education. As a founding member of the Trauma Informed Education Coalition in Pennsylvania, for which Pennsylvania House Resolution 191 was the catalyst, I have continued to be engaged at the policy and education community level advocating for trauma-informed education, which has made significant policy advances in the State of Pennsylvania. These hearings today provide the opportunity for me to bring that message to New Jersey, whose children and youth have helped to provide the foundation for my observations and inspire my advocacy, and to apply that message to school security from a trauma-informed perspective.

### This Epidemic: A Manifestation of Institutional Racism

The Founder and Director of Mothers in Charge, Dorothy Johnson-Speight, often begins her talks with “No one is safe until we are all safe.” No one is safe until we are all safe, but some of us are safer than others walking outside of our homes into our communities, and most of us do not have to hit the floors of our homes dodging bullets coming through our windows, as some members of Mothers In Charge do.

Early in my work with Mothers In Charge, as I listened to the stories of those suffering from severe, homicidal grief, a grief unlike any other, and learned more about the needs of black youth entering the juvenile justice system, I saw quickly that this is not a universal problem scattered equally across the social strata. The mothers grieving their loved ones lost to homicide are almost all African American, living primarily in African American communities, in relatively close proximity to where the homicides occur, in the City of Philadelphia. It did not take long for the lights to go on. Very soon, I realized that this is a problem with its roots deeply embedded in our society. This problem is a contemporary manifestation of institutional racism. I was so troubled, and outraged, that I was moved to develop what I observed into a presentation, entitled “The Youth Violence Epidemic as a Contemporary Manifestation of Institutional Racism: Mothers In Charge as an Organizational Antidote,” which I invited Ms. Speight to do with me at the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Work’s Annual Conference that Spring. (Davis and Speight, 2008)

### Demoralization

In his seminal work, *Persuasion and Healing*, (1961), Jerome Frank, well known psychiatrist and psychologist and Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine until his death in 2005, coined the concept “demoralization.” In its third edition (1991), he and his daughter, Julia, also, a psychiatrist, wrote:

Dictionaries define demoralize ‘to deprive a person of spirit, courage, to dishearten, bewilder, to throw a person into disorder or confusion.’ Typically, they are conscious of having failed to meet their own expectations or those of others, or being unable to cope with some pressing problem. They feel powerless to change the situation or themselves and cannot extricate themselves from their predicament. This situation has been conceptualized as a ‘crisis’ if acute (Korchin,1975) and as

the 'social breakdown syndrome' if chronic (Gruenberg, 1974) (see Chapter 12)."  
 Features of demoralization are anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, and low self-esteem.  
 Social support and a sense of community are essential in healing from demoralization.

While those who are demoralized may look to be depressed, they are suffering from *oppression* caused by *externally imposed* situations or conditions.

### The Youth Violence Epidemic: A Public Health Problem

Webster defines *epidemic* as "prevalent and spreading rapidly among many people in a community at the same time; widespread; said especially of a contagious disease." (Webster, 1960). Those suffering from a contagious disease need treatment, and the disease needs to be contained to prevent its spread. The youth violence epidemic has been declared public health problem ([www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/report.html)) A problem affecting the public's health is a medical problem. Medical problems require medical treatment, not law enforcement, to heal. That does not mean that there are not situations where law enforcement is required, but law enforcement is not the primary treatment for a medical problem.

### Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the medical condition associated with violence. It is a mental health condition, and the treatment of it must correspond to the diagnosis. Not everyone exposed to violence meets all of the symptom criteria of PTSD, but many, if not most, will experience some of the symptoms. When violence affects the whole community, many of its members are experiencing at least some of its symptoms, and the intervention needs to be at the community level.

### Youth and Communities Plagued by Violence in *Shell Shock* © (Davis, 2011)

Now, think of the children and adolescents living in these communities driven by chaos as being in *shell shock* in an undeclared *war on the streets* and think of the *whole community* as being in shell shock. How does that affect your thinking about what an education system needs to provide for children and teens coming to school everyday in *shell shock*? What did the Veterans Administration do for war veterans? It created special treatment units for their care, and it established a very specific protocol to protect them and those around them.

What is the education system doing to care for the children, teens and the school, all in *shell shock*? Putting in metal detectors, security guards and the police. That is like surrounding veterans returning from the frontlines with the enemy. How would they respond? Like they were on the frontlines. They would shoot them. How are the children and teens responding to the implementation of security measures that remind them that they are unsafe? I refer you to the *Zero Tolerance Report* published by the Youth United for Change with the support of the Advancement Project with current research findings about the effectiveness of the use of law enforcement in treating a medical disorder. The findings show that children are being pushed out of school and being criminalized, not helped.

(<http://www.advancementproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/YUC%20Report%20Final%20-%20Lo-Res.pdf>)

### Prevailing Rule of Trauma © (Davis, 2011)

In the place of flashbacks, children and adolescents respond to trauma through behavioral reenactments. In a community plagued by violence, children reenact the trauma created by the violence by traumatizing each other. When there is a violence epidemic, the whole community is plagued by violence reenactments. Psychologically, we all live, not by the Golden Rule, but by the Prevailing Rule of Trauma, “*Do unto others as you have been done unto.*” That is how we are made up psychologically. Like an antibiotic, it protects us emotionally. It takes us out of a position of *being acted upon* to *acting upon* and out of a situation of *being helpless and powerless* to *being in control*.

### Behavioral Reenactments and Children and Youth

Trauma, by definition, involves the sudden and unexpected with no time in advance to prepare emotionally for it. In trauma, anxiety *follows* the event rather than preceding it, which gives warning and some time to prepare. Flashbacks in adults and behavioral reenactments in children and teens help to work through the anxiety that follows trauma by reliving it with the hope of a different outcome. Trauma puts everyone in a state of *hypervigilance*, always on the lookout, and *hyperarousal*, always on guard, ready to defend against an attack.

### Education System Response to *Shell Shocked Youth*

Instead of preventing what it is that metal detectors, security guards and the police are installed to prevent, they re-traumatize already traumatized children and adolescents and produce the violence they are intended to prevent. It is called *reactivity*, or in education language, the *Pygmalion effect*. Not only do children and adolescents entering the school environment suffer from the traumatic stress effects of a community permeated by violence, but so do all whose job it is to care for them, at home and at school.

### Injury, Not Pathology

Early on in my work with members of Mothers In Charge, I came to see that what members coming for grief support presented was not *pathological*. They were not mentally ill. Their hearts were aching, and their spirits were broken. Shock and sorrow permeated all of their being. What they presented in their grief was not caused by a mental disorder. It was caused by a shocking, life-altering event that robbed their loved one of life. They were injured, like someone run over by a truck or ambushed. Interventions needed to be based on a rehabilitation model, not a pathology model.

## A Trauma Informed Education System

Several years later, I discovered the work of Sandra Bloom, MD, Co-Director of the Center for Nonviolence in the Department of Public Health at Drexel University, and her Sanctuary model, which evolved out of research at the Veterans Administration with war veterans. I was pleased to learn that she shared the view that trauma victims are *injured* and that traumatized children and teens who are misbehaving in school are "*injured, not bad.*" She has developed a trauma-informed framework that can be implemented in a variety of settings, including the school.

In her paper, "Creating Sanctuary in the School" ([www.sanctuaryweb.com](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com)) she calls for the school to *shift* its thinking from viewing traumatized children and teens as "bad" to seeing them as *injured* and to change the question when they misbehave from "What is wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?" and "How can I Help?" She said that the shift to the injury model "in *no way*" implies an "abdication of responsibility" but rather a "sharing of responsibility" where "punishment is used only to the extent that it serves the purpose of providing the child with an alternative learning experience that does not automatically reenact the previous traumatic experience." It is designed to provide a "corrective emotional experience." She wrote:

Punishment must never be violent or traumatic, if it is, we simply deepen the problem instead of correcting it. Any situation that places the child's body in a state of hyperarousal and overwhelming emotion increases the likelihood of a traumatic response. Children who have responded to injury by engaging in 'bad' behavior are reenacting their traumatic relationships with caregivers...the key in strategizing how to handle 'bad' kids is figuring out how *not* to do what it is they are cueing us to do...If hyperaroused, distressed children can depend on a network of relationships within which they can talk about their pain, learn new skills, and trust other people, the likelihood will be greatly increased that they will be far better able to learn and do less acting out in the classroom" (Bloom, 1995).

### Call to Action

1. Develop legislation that focuses on the resources children and youth need to develop their potential and succeed, not increase the risk of danger and traumatization by bringing weapons, police, and bullet proof booths into schools
2. Reorient your view to look upon traumatized youth as *injured*, not bad, in need of trauma recognition and trauma support
3. Create policy for all school districts to put into place a *universal education system* that requires that *all children be screened for trauma* and that its *education system be trauma-informed*

4. Create a Commission to study the trauma-informed, educational needs of all of New Jersey's children using the Sanctuary model as one among other whole school models for a trauma-informed framework ([www.sanctuaryweb.com](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com))
5. Review "Schools as Sanctuaries" for Sanctuary models used in three southern New Jersey schools ([www.sanctuaryweb.com](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com)) Create policy to generate the laws, regulations, and funding needed to provide a trauma-informed education system across New Jersey that is responsive to the needs of demoralized youth who are suffering from *social breakdown syndrome* (Frank and Frank, 1991) struggling to survive in communities plagued with violence
6. Create policy and provide funding to require *universal trauma screening for all students* across New Jersey to determine their trauma needs and to establish the level of trauma-informed intervention needed by each school in each district across New Jersey using a trauma-informed framework based on the Sanctuary model
7. Review the Adverse Childhood Experiences study ([www.sanctuaryweb.com](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com)) funded by the Center for Disease Control as a model to guide the development of a screening instrument for use in the education system as a screening protocol
8. Create policy and provide funding for *universal, safe quality education for all* of the New Jersey's youth, not only some, to regulate and monitor State-wide, trauma-informed education system from a central source that requires that all schools, not only some, follow the same trauma-informed education system protocol

#### New Jersey Legislature Charge

As Legislators, you are in a position to do something about their cries, to pay attention to them. You can create policy to develop a trauma-informed response their needs, to give them equal opportunities, and to lift them out of the valley of despair. They are *my* children. They are *your* children. They are *all of our* children.

Humanity calls out for social justice. Let all children know that you care. Let all children know that New Jersey cares. Give each and every child the universal public school support that will position them to succeed in this world. Provide trauma-informed policy to heal and protect New Jersey's youth and make New Jersey *a safer place for all, not only some*.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Betty Lee Davis*

Betty Lee Davis, Ph.D., LCSW  
 Founding Member, Trauma-Informed  
 Education Coalition

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- ([www.sanctuaryweb.com](http://www.sanctuaryweb.com)) “Creating Sanctuary in Schools--” Sandra Bloom, MD  
“Schools as Sanctuaries”—Stanwood, Mark and Doolittle, Gina

## APPENDIX B

Educationally Relevant Trauma Concepts

**Trauma.** By definition, trauma is sudden and unexpected. It occurs on a continuum. It is a part of life that comes to all of us, with the loss of a loved one, an illness, an accident, or a job loss. Posttraumatic stress disorder is a more severe form of trauma resulting from exposure to life-threatening danger to self or another. While all of us may experience posttraumatic effects, not all of us experience posttraumatic stress disorder.

**Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A Medical Disorder.** Until recently when references to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have appeared more frequently in the media, it was more commonly known as *shell shock*, and the term was reserved for war veterans. Advances in the understanding of trauma have let us know that we are all vulnerable to experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder, not only war veterans, when exposed to danger (real or threatened) or violence in any of its multiple forms--domestic violence, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, or community violence in the neighborhood or at school. A medical disorder, it is classified as a psychiatric disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition, DSM-V TM, (2013) and in the *Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* (1992). Untreated, traumatized students are suffering from an untreated medical disorder (Davis, July, 2011). They are coming to school in *shell shock* unable to focus or sit still and at risk for aggression, like the war veteran, with an often unidentified or misdiagnosed, medical disorder and not free to develop their full potential (Davis, July, 2011).

**Key to Understanding PTSD Behavioral Responses to Danger** (Appendix C). Exposure to real or threatened danger or violence has three types of brain effects: *hyperarousal* (fight), *dissociation* (flight), and *emotional numbing* (freeze). Each of these behavioral responses has a protective, survival function residing in the primitive part of our brain. They are universal across cultural and species domains. They may persist long after the actual threat is gone and be triggered by reminders of the original danger in the form of a flashback, which may not always occur at the conscious level, but also at the sensory level in the form of a smell, sound, image or limitless unanticipated signals. The individual may not be aware of the trigger and may be puzzled by what is happening to cause the behavior as may be others as it may appear to make no sense. The trigger is like an inescapable smoke alarm going off in the brain. The hyperarousal response is like a roller coaster with anger escalating rapidly in a fight against the perceived danger. Once the roller coaster has gone up, the person has no control over it until it reaches its peak and comes down the other side to calm. The dissociative response is a way to take flight by "zoning out" when another form of fleeing the danger is not possible. The emotional numbing response is a form of freezing emotionally by becoming immobilized or apathetic.

If not recognized and supported, any one of these natural, protective responses to danger puts a student at risk in the school environment academically by being unable to focus on learning or through aggressive or disruptive behavior.

**Neurophysiology of Trauma.** Advanced trauma theory focuses on trauma's impact on the brain and body (Perry, et al, 1995. Van der Kolk, 2014). Stored in the brain, trauma results in a prolonged alarm state and alters neural systems. Brain-focused, trauma- specific treatment "opens new neural pathways" (B. Ogunkua, personal communication, January 13, 2015). New neural pathways can be opened by a safe, healing relationship and "developmentally, patterned, pleasurable, rhythmic and respectful input," like physical exercise, music, dancing, singing, drumming, yoga, theatre groups, walking, running, and animal-assisted therapy (Perry; Van der Kolk, 2014).

**Behavioral Reenactments.** Behavioral reenactment is a protective psychological mechanism that is a universal response to trauma (DSM V, 2013; Davis, July, 2011; Bloom, 1995; Herman, 1992). For children, it is a primary response to trauma. It follows the "prevailing rule of trauma—do unto others as you have been done unto" (Davis, August, 2011). In the absence of treatment, trauma spreads through behavioral reenactments. Untreated traumatized children are doing exactly what they are programmed to do, traumatizing each other (Davis, July, 2011).

**Secondary Trauma.** Principles related to unpredictable stress and stress-response systems apply to adults as well as children. A teacher working in a setting with episodic, unpredictable stressors is at risk for developing trauma-related symptoms. Not only will this teacher suffer personally but will have a negative impact on his or her students capacity to learn. The dysregulated teacher will have have a dysregulated classroom (Perry, Case-Based Training Series, 2015).

**Hidden Trauma** (Davis, 2015). Behavior students bring into the classroom not identified as having its origin in trauma. It results from circumstances in the student's personal life about which the school may not know and can impede school performance.

**Educational Trauma** (Davis, 2015). Trauma resulting from the school's failure to identify and support a student's trauma needs by mislabeling behavior, inappropriate educational placement, or punitive discipline rather than a trauma-informed intervention.

**Educational Safety** (Davis, 2015) Educational safety is essential to healing from trauma in the educational setting. Educational safety is not limited to a safe physical environment, but safety from punitive educational responses resulting from the failure to identify and support trauma needs.

**Resilience.** Resilience is the ability to bounce back. It refers to protective factors which enable a person to recover, move forward, and sometimes to grow from trauma. It may be the individual's temperament, intellectual, athletic, or creative ability, spirituality, or interpersonal relationship ability.

**Antedote to Trauma.** Safety is essential in combination with a healing relationship and soothing the brain through calming, rhythmic, repetitive, and patterned activity.

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[www.ChildTrauma.org](http://www.ChildTrauma.org)

APPENDIX A

# House of Representatives



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

*In the House, April 22, 2013*

*Whereas, Youth across this Commonwealth are committing acts of violence against one another and throughout their communities; and*

*Whereas, A national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that United States adults reported approximately 1.56 million incidents of victimization by perpetrators estimated to be between 12 and 20 years of age; and*

*Whereas, The CDC states, "Violence is a serious public health problem in the United States. From infants to the elderly, it affects people in all stages of life. In 2007, more than 18,000 people were victims of homicide and more than 34,000 took their own life." ; and*

*Whereas, The CDC reports that many people survive violence and are left with permanent physical and emotional scars and that violence erodes communities by reducing productivity, decreasing property values and disrupting social services; and*

*Whereas, A national initiative lead by the CDC, Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere (STRIVE), assists communities in applying a public health perspective to preventing youth violence; and*

*Whereas, In 1985, former United States Surgeon General C. Everett Koop declared violence as a public health issue and called for the application of the science of public health to the treatment and prevention of violence; and*

*Whereas, In 2000, former United States Surgeon General David Satcher declared youth violence as a public health epidemic; and*

*Whereas, Dr. Satcher released a report that deems youth violence as a threat to public health and calls for Federal, state, local and private entities to invest in research on*

*youth violence and for the use of the knowledge gained to inform intervention programs; and*

*Whereas, The report states that the public health approach to youth violence involves identifying risk and protective factors, determining how they work, making the public aware of these findings and designing programs to prevent or stop the violence; and*

*Whereas, The 2000 public health report calls for national resolve to confront the problem of youth violence systematically; to facilitate entry of youth into effective intervention programs rather than incarceration; to improve public awareness of effective interventions; to convene youth, families, researchers and public and private organizations for a periodic youth violence summit; to develop new collaborative multidisciplinary partnerships; and to hold periodic, highly visible national summits; and*

*Whereas, An individual's characteristics, experiences and environmental conditions during childhood and adolescence are an indicator of future violent behavior; and*

*Whereas, Ages 15 through 18, the ages that students spend in high school, are the peak years of offending; and*

*Whereas, There is concern about high school dropout rates, academic performance and violence in schools across this Commonwealth; and*

*Whereas, According to the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center, the Comer School Development Program offers low-achieving schools assistance in creating a conducive learning environment while providing a solid foundation for students; and*

*Whereas, The work of the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center has demonstrated that, "When teachers, administrators, parents, and/or mature adults interact with students in a supportive school environment and/or culture, and provide adequate instruction in a way that mediates physical, social-interactive, psycho-emotional, moral-ethical, linguistic and cognitive-intellectual development, acceptable academic achievement will take place."; and*

*Whereas, The Comer School Development Program is an operating system comprised of three teams: the School Planning and Management Team, the Student and Staff Support Team and the Parent Team, which work together to create a comprehensive school plan; and*

*Whereas, The Comer School Development Program model is guided by three principles: decision-making by consensus, no-fault problem solving and collaboration; and*

*Whereas, The Pennsylvania State Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Branches, through its Education Committee members, have given testimony before the Education Committee of the House of Representatives calling for attention to the impact of trauma brought about by violence and other adverse conditions on children's academic performance as well as their relationship with school and the broader society; and*

*Whereas, Due to the violence epidemic, youth suffer from either primary or secondary trauma. Primary trauma is trauma associated with the violent death of a loved one. Secondary trauma results from exposure to violence present within their community; and*

*Whereas, Exposure to violence in families and communities, as well as exposure to homicidal death, can lead to youth-specific post-traumatic stress disorder with complex effects as well as homicidal grief; and*

*Whereas, Trauma is not easily visible within youth because it requires proper assessment and, due to the amount of violence youth are currently exposed to, measures should be taken to properly assess the issue; and*

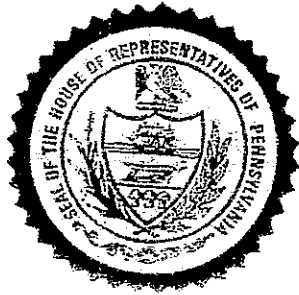
*Whereas, The experience of trauma impacts children of all situations and conditions across this Commonwealth; and*

*Whereas, In August 2007, the CDC deemed schools as providing "a critical opportunity for changing societal behavior because almost the entire population is engaged in this institution for many years, starting at an early and formative period" and "Universal school-based violence prevention programs represent an important means of reducing violent and aggressive behavior in the United States." ; therefore be it*

*Resolved, That the House of Representatives declare youth violence as a public health epidemic and support the establishment of Statewide trauma-informed education.*

*I certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of House Resolution No. 191, introduced by Waters, Fabrizio, Kortz, Youngblood, Donatucci, Pashinski, Harkins, Readshaw, J. Harris, Flynn, Rozzi, Cohen, V. Brown, Clymer,*

*Brownlee, Frankel, Gingrich, McCarter, Bishop and Kirkland.*



*Samuel H. Smith*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*Samuel H. Smith, Speaker*

APPENDIX C

Effects of Traumatic Events on  
Children

Shue Perry, MD, Ph.D.

one copy photocopied for  
original submission

available by arrangement  
with legislative staff



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**Testimony Before the Senate and Assembly Education Committees on School Security  
April 23, 2018**

Good afternoon Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Lampitt and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on school security. There is no topic more important.

I speak to you today as Executive Director of the Garden State Coalition, but also as an 18-year Board of Education member. For 16 years I have been president of that board. I have listened to emotional testimony from parents following 9/11, Sandy Hook, Parkland and all the school shootings in between. After Sandy Hook, the parent of a first grader came to our board meeting and asked us directly, "Can you guarantee that my child will be safe in school?" I knew then and I know now that no matter what we do and what policies we put in place, not one of us here today can make that guarantee.

In the years since Columbine and especially since Sandy Hook, every district that I know of has worked on security upgrades. We never forget our obligation to create educational spaces that are welcoming and nurturing to our students and community, while being as secure as possible. We are also very aware of the situations that we cannot control, including recess, outdoor sporting events, field trips and school arrival/dismissal times.

So what can we do? The following are a few suggestions:

- **Create situation-specific solutions.** In New Jersey our strength is in our diversity, but that means that there is no one security solution that works for every school district.

Trying to legislate a single solution or solutions will not serve the best interests of our

students. Local districts should have the power to decide which security measures work best for their students and their communities.

- **Understand what is already in place:** Many security tools and procedures already exist. The most important tool currently in districts' hands is the annual Memorandum of Agreement between the district and local law enforcement agencies. This has helped draw districts and police agencies together. Used properly, the Memorandum enhances communication and cooperation.
- **Resources:** Mandates without resources are hollow, forcing school districts to choose between education and security. Give districts the resources they need, either via cap waivers or increased security grants, to pay for the security upgrades that local educators, boards and communities believe will help ensure student safety.
- **Security is more than compliance:** Whatever measures you take, do not create additional compliance responsibilities for educators. Increased data collection and complex reporting requirements never made anyone safer and may have the opposite effect by taking up educators' precious time.
- **Mental Health:** Include mental health services and personnel under allowable expenses for security-related cap waivers and/or grants. One trait that seems to characterize the majority of school violence perpetrators is loss and alienation. Give us the resources to hire the professionals and services we need to deal with students who suffer from these all-too-common conditions. As with learning deficits, early identification of emotional trauma and psychological damage may well do much more for school security than doors, scanners, cameras and bulletproof glass.

Many times, when school shootings happen, I hear, "the schools did nothing," or "the schools didn't do enough" to prevent tragedy. As a board member and an education advocate, I know that there is always more that we can do, but no one can do it all. Parenting is an act of faith. Sending children to school is an act of faith. Being an educator is an act of faith. Being a legislator or a local school board member and meeting in a public place, sometimes with a hostile crowd present, is an act of faith. In our efforts to find security solutions, let's use compassion and not give in to the temptation to turn on each other. If we do, the destructive forces present—inside and outside our public institutions—will have won.