
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

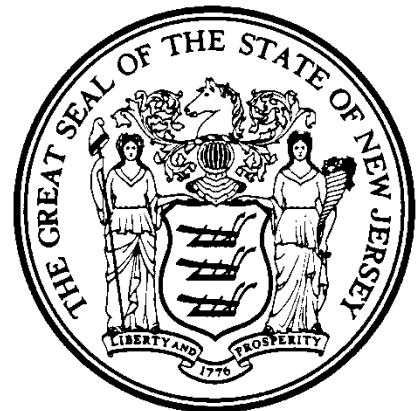
“The Committee will meet to hear a presentation from the New Jersey Association of School Administrators of their School Safety & Security Report”

LOCATION: Meeting Via Zoom

DATE: October 5, 2023
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Joseph P. Cryan, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Co-Chair
Senator Renee C. Burgess
Senator Samuel D. Thompson
Senator Declan J. O’Scanlon, Jr.
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey
Assemblywoman Victoria A. Flynn
Assemblywoman Michele Matsikoudis
Assemblyman Erik K. Simonsen



ALSO PRESENT:

Rebecca DiBenedetti

Executive Director

Ivy Pomper

Executive Assistant

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Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

SENATE

Hon. James Beach
Hon. Renee C. Burgess
Hon. Joseph P. Cryan
Hon. Declan J. O'Scanlon, Jr.
Hon. Michael L. Testa
Hon. Samuel D. Thompson



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MEETING NOTICE

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools will meet on Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 10:00 a.m., via Zoom to hear a presentation from the New Jersey Association of School Administrators of their School Safety & Security Report.

The public may address comments and questions to Rebecca DiBenedetti, Executive Director, at 609-331-2485, or by email at Rsapp@njleg.org

Issued September 18, 2023

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

(Co-Chair): You want to start us with a roll call?

MS. DiBENEDETTI: Sure.

Senator Thompson. (no response)

Is here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: He is here.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: Assemblywoman Flynn.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: Here.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: Assemblywoman Jasey. (no response)

She is here.

Assemblywoman Matsikoudis is signed on.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MATSIKOUDIS: Present.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Here.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: And, Senator Cryan.

SENATOR JOSEPH P. CRYAN (Co-Chair): Here.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: I know that Assemblyman Simonsen and
Assemblyman Wimberly will be joining us, as well as Senator Burgess.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Awesome.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: And, Senator O'Scanlon will be joining us
as well.

STEPHANIE JOHNSON: Hi, I'm Stephanie; I'm here for
Senator Burgess.

MS. DiBENEDETTI: Fantastic; thank you.

MS. JOHNSON: You're welcome.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, O'Scanlon is on.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Awesome.

Well, I'm ready to get started. I'm going to just have a few brief opening remarks, and I want to welcome you all here and say good morning to you, and thank you for joining us today.

I am Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Co-Chair along with Senator Cryan, of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, and I am honored to welcome you to this important meeting with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators to review and discuss the School Safety and Security Report.

As we gather here today on this digital platform, I want to emphasize the importance of our collective efforts in enhancing school safety, security, and mental health in all of our public schools. Today, we have the privilege of hearing from distinguished experts in the field of education and school administration, led by Melanie Schulz, who is the amazing Director of Governmental Relations at the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. She is a professional with over three decades of superior statewide educational policy, regulation, and legislative experience.

Without further ado, I will now pass the virtual podium over to Melanie Schulz, who will introduce our esteemed speakers: Dr. Charles B. Sampson, Superintendent of Freehold Regional High School District, and Dr. MaryJane Garibay, Superintendent of Colts Neck Township, where she will present -- *they* will present -- the New Jersey ASA School Safety and Security Final Report. They are experts; they have the experience; and their contributions in giving this report will be an ongoing effort to develop policies and strategies that prioritize safety and the well-being of our students and school communities.

Melanie.

M E L A N I E S C H U L Z: Well, thank you for that incredible introduction. I am very touched.

Good morning, Chairs Cryan and Reynolds-Jackson, and members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. We thank you for this opportunity to come before you, and, on behalf of NJASA, I am here to introduce your presenters.

Dr. Charles Sampson is the Chief Academic Officer of the Freehold Regional High School District, and Dr. MaryJane Garibay is the Chief Academic Officer of the Colts Neck School District. Together, they co-chaired the NJASA School Safety and Security Report.

But, before I hand over the microphone, I want to just make a few remarks. The safety of our students and faculty is the single item that keeps us up at night, and districts are constantly reviewing the policies and practices and utilizing the latest technology available.

So, why did we do this report? We realized that we didn't have a good landscape analysis of what kinds of school security districts had invested in. Where were the inequities; what do we need to do to resolve those differences; and how can we gain support for those gaps?

And, that leads me to: Why now? Unfortunately, and starting with the tragedy at Columbine 24 years ago -- I can't believe it's been that long -- school districts began to lean into upping their security efforts. Those efforts included hardening their facilities; hiring security personnel; and having students and faculty regularly go through drills.

At NJASA, the tragedy at Uvalde was the tipping point for us to perform an in-depth examination, which led to the creation of a committee charged with a report that we could share with all of our stakeholders.

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Charles Sampson and Dr. MaryJane Garibay, who will lead you through the work of this committee and the suggestions that we hope will turn into your legislative support.

Thank you so much.

MARYJANE GARIBAY, Ed.D.: Thank you, Melanie, and thank you to everyone for having us here.

Dr. Sampson, I don't mind jumping in and starting.

I was very passionate about this project, as we all are as school leaders. In my 27 years in public education, first you start in your classroom and you're thinking about your students; and then you move through administration and you're still thinking about your students; but, you have different levels of responsibility and the different lenses that you're looking at.

One of the things that happened, as Melanie mentioned, after Uvalde, was-- I think there was a sense from a group of us that felt every time this happens, and a child is harmed or killed in a space that's supposed to be safe, nurturing, and focused on the best interest of the children always, it's saddening; it's frustrating; and you feel an empowerment that you want to do something without really knowing what to do, because you feel like you're doing everything possible. Shortly after what happened in Uvalde, what motivated me to be part of this committee was that I had a non-emergent but precautionary evacuation of my full middle school that forced

us to do a reunification off site. And, it was due to a potential perceived threat of my middle school.

And, Uvalde, coupled with that incident that happened two weeks later, was an internal call to action for me, that I felt that-- And, I was welcomed, I was so grateful to Melanie and to Dr. Bozza and NJASA for inviting me and allowing me, with Chuck and others who were in attendance to that summer meeting, to speak to NJASA about our passions and that feeling that we need to do *something*, because what we're doing is-- In New Jersey, we're very fortunate for the resources and the laws that are in place that help support the safety and security of our students. But, when that is violated and penetrated -- whether it's here in New Jersey or in another place -- there is still a feeling of, just a wanting to do something.

And, so, when Dr. Sampson and I began this journey together -- with others who joined in, because there were many people involved in this process; it wasn't us -- and voices from all throughout the state were collected, we felt that we first needed to level set. We wanted to be able to say, "Listen, we are all feeling something." Something like Uvalde doesn't happen -- Columbine, Parkland, Sandy Hook -- name it, the list goes on; the list goes on and on, and you don't feel it as a school leader, that awesome responsibility, that call to action, and that questioning, "Am I doing enough?" Because, at the end of the day, I think Dr. Sampson and I would agree, at the end of the day, it's you as the school leader.

And, when we got together, we said that we thought intrinsically the best scenario to start would be to talk outreach to our school leaders, our fellow school leaders. What do you have in place? And, that was something-- Dr. Sampson, if you want to jump in, with regard to that process of

collecting information and working with the committee. What questions were important for us to ask? What information did we want from them that would help inform this report?

So, Dr. Sampson, I don't know if you want to jump in there.

C H A R L E S B. S A M P S O N, Ed.D: Yes, thank you, MJ.

And, thank you to members of the Joint Committee; I appreciate your time and hearing us out.

There was-- I think the irony of the report itself was that Uvalde was the galvanizing activity, and by the time we even organized ourselves into committees, there had been multiple other school shootings. And, so, Melanie had asked us yesterday in an email, "Can we point to specific instances where something has occurred?"

You know, New Jersey has been fortunate, but I can tell you this: For three years running, the number of firearms that have been discharged in a school have increased across the country. In 2022, 55 times guns were shot *within* a school. So, it's only a matter of -- it's not when, right, it's-- We've been lucky in New Jersey. I can tell you, as a superintendent of six large high schools, in the past week alone I had two false gun threats that were misproven, and I had a student pull a knife on another student. That's just a day in the life, a week in the life of a superintendent in New Jersey with the types of things we're dealing with presently.

So, one of the things we wanted to do is understand, what does this look like across the districts? And, obviously, everybody on this call knows local control rules in New Jersey, and you have a really wide range of school districts in configurations -- K-6s, K-8s -- small, large. And, we had about 30 or so other superintendents who came to get on a call. And, there

was really just an expressed fear that what I'm doing isn't enough; that we need additional support; that we're concerned. Post-COVID, certainly -- I'll give you-- Our number of HIBs have increased four times, and those are-- This is the world we're living in, right?

We're also--

DR. GARIBAY: Dr. Sampson, if I could jump in, too.

The one thing that's also prevalent, that was a voiced concern among the group that we put together for about the 30 superintendents, was the decisions that school leaders are faced -- are forced -- to make these days with regards to their funding, and how you support security while you're also trying to support the instructional and social-emotional learning that needs to also take place.

So, you've got-- We talk about safety and security being our Number 1 priority. Academics are our priority; mental health are our priorities. But, at the end of the day, your purse is only so big, and you have to fund those priorities in a very realistic and responsible way.

And, that was a catalyst for, I think, the survey was saying, "OK, well, how are we prioritizing; what are we prioritizing?" And, if your budget is a reflection of your district's priorities, but, yet, you're either making a choice -- and, Chuck, you can speak to this very well -- where you're making a choice between having a security monitor or a classroom full of 35 students. Where is that priority going? How do you even say that one is more important than the other?

So, Chuck, go ahead; I'm sorry.

DR. SAMPSON: Yes, and to illuminate that example, I'll give you just some hard numbers from my district alone.

I've been the superintendent here for 13 years. That's a long run. I've cut 112 positions, and many beyond this call know I've been a vocal advocate about S2. But, while I've cut 112 positions across the district, I've actually added 12 security positions. And, so, I'm cutting English teachers, math teachers, things like that, to add additional security, because, frankly, if you don't believe that your buildings are safe, you're going to add staff; safety is what's paramount.

For districts, when we surveyed about 230-plus superintendents across the state, what we found was an incredible range in terms of what folks had available. Many districts don't even have security in New Jersey, and one of the overriding reasons why they do not is because they couldn't afford it, and that they made other decisions. There were a couple communities where they said they didn't want a security presence, but those were few and far between. I think we referenced the Gallup poll that I think 80% of the public at this point in time support some sort of armed presence in schools.

From a dollars-and-cents standpoint, and, as members of the committee, I'm sure you're aware the security category that is provided to schools each year is about \$91 a student. I just want to put that in perspective: That, in my district, that doesn't even cover half the cost of the staff alone for security, let alone the infrastructure needs, the web-enabled systems that we utilize now. And, one of the things that we really uncovered as part of the survey with superintendents is there was a bit of confusion around what was or wasn't available as it related to security. So, there had been some stopgap state initiatives around digital mapping, for instance. Well, money came through for digital mapping, but many of us had mapped our districts years ago.

And, so, we said, “Well, hey, we would have used that if we could have utilized those dollars at that point in time.” So, there was no clear sort of State-level expectation utilizing experts around what do we need to make sure that all of our schools are secure? And, I’ll reference the most recent report, was the 2015 School Security Task Force that was shared, so, largely a political exercise. There’s not a lot of real substance to it. It hasn’t been updated in eight years. And, there’s literally no recognized expertise around what schools should be doing in 2023 to make sure that their buildings are safe. And, some folks who are on the task force didn’t even remember being on the task force, but that’s a whole other story.

What we have found in New Jersey is that it is-- We are making difficult decisions that often either compromise security, or compromise the classroom based on an individual district-to-district existence. One of our asks is to, first and foremost, reconvene a committee of experts that utilize people from the field to update that 2015 Task Force Committee Report, because it is woefully inadequate and outdated to help schools across New Jersey.

The second real ask -- and, we said this in all of my sort of S2 arguments over the years -- one of the things that we’ve pointed out regularly to our elected officials is, if you increase extraordinary aid, for instance, you help all. You help every district. Every district has special-needs students; every district has high-need special-need students who are an exorbitant cost. If the State would utilize the existing mechanism of that categorical aid for security and expand that, it would help all school districts. But, if we actually - If we convene that report first, and challenge the DOE to get that done, which is another issue, I understand. But, if they were able to get that done,

then we would have clear recommendations that schools could follow in that categorical aid that already exists.

So, the mechanism in the budgets already exist to provide schools with specific funding for agreed-upon best practices in 2023. We are really out of date and out of time as a state, in terms of how we're approaching this, and what we've-- Our current existence is sort of leaving it up to 600 different districts to figure out their way to best do it, and I think the trigger point -- no pun intended -- of Uvalde that everybody was so angry about, everyone said, "How could it be that absolute inept response to a school shooting? How can that exist in 2023?" That was where folks couldn't believe it. Well, I can tell you, you have districts in New Jersey that have no security. What do you think is going to be the response if something like that happens? There's no trained security officials in the entire district. We have a number of districts like that.

DR. GARIBAY: And, Chuck, I think the one thing that we went back to is what is required right now.

So, we have standard drilling that takes place. You have emergency response; you have fire drills; you have active shooter lockdown drills. There's required drilling -- that's required. But, those are practices in response to an incident, OK, so you have to practice that. That's a requirement. You have to have certain policies in place -- that's a requirement. And, you have to have an annual memorandum of agreement with your law enforcement agency.

Those are, right now, the only requirements for safety and security for schools. That's it. There are laws for recording and different things that all go into policies. But, with regards to the infrastructures of our

buildings, those are the only things that are required -- unless I'm remiss, and please correct me if I'm wrong -- but, I haven't found anything else that is required. Security personal are *not* required; vestibules are *not* required; swipe card access systems for staff and students are *not* required. None of these--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Bullet-proof glass--

DR. GARIBAY: --are required. And, as we've all gone out and explored what can we possibly do-- We're very fortunate in Monmouth County. I'm even more fortunate being part of the regional district of where I am, that we share our resources and talk. That's not happening everywhere in the State of New Jersey.

As a matter of fact, I am also very fortunate that I have an excellent relationship and partnership with my local law enforcement agency. The Colts Neck Police is outstanding and completely responsive, as are many of the other local police departments in my area, where there are areas in New Jersey without local law enforcement agencies. And, that's a municipality decision. So, they rely on State Police responding to them, which could add time to a response. That is an inequity, where I have-- My board, my administration, my town, is invested in safety and security, and I think one of the glaring things that appeared in the report when we went was the disparity, that it is not -- when we talk a lot about equity at the state level. The security of the students in the State of New Jersey in public schools is *not* equitable right now; it just is not.

That is, yes, a local decision, but when you have districts that are without police departments -- and, that is something that is maybe a cross-conversation. Another aspect of that is one of the things I think we've talked about in groups -- and, Chuck, jump in as well -- is one of the things that

sometimes is difficult to predict, navigate, is intent. So, when someone has an intent to harm or an intent to cause distress and chaos and harm in a school district, in a school, that is something that is difficult to navigate, and this year school districts were required to implement a threat-assessment team.

And, I understand, conceptually, the response behind that and the rationale for that. But, one of the things that I think you're hearing from school leaders is that the same people who are trained, certified teachers, and experts in children and pedagogy and all those things, are now becoming -- required to become -- experts in predictions of mental health and predictions of actions that could potentially cause harm. And, I think that's something that, from a community point of view, resources to invest from the State Department of Education and the State, to help support school staff in mental health on a consistent and accessible way, in a proactive means, is also something that we need. And, we've touched upon that as well. That it's not just the hardening of our infrastructures; it's not just the personnel and the resources; it's *everything* that is happening with regards to mental health. And, I know that New Jersey has put out different mechanisms for - - at an attempt to help with mental health.

But, again, that is not consistent throughout the state, nor is it, in our professional opinion, enough. It's just not enough for what we have here. I have 1,000 students in my district; Chuck has 10,000 students in his district. And, to say that there is two additional people for the county is just when you sit back as a school leader and say, "I don't know how that's going to work."

DR. SAMPSON: Yes, and I'll just dovetail on that.

We're appreciative of the efforts across the state--

DR. GARIBAY: Of course.

DR. SAMPSON: The hub-and-spoke model, it is not going to work. I mean, I'm saying it publicly; I've said it publicly. We've said it over and over again, and I know there is \$43 million invested in it. It's just redundant to a lot of the services we already provide. It actually doesn't provide the things we need, which is that really exceptional tier-3 level of support.

But, I do want to share with the Committee, when we first met about this report, one of the things that a number of the superintendents were fearful of -- especially post-COVID -- were some of the students who we were turning loose onto society after experiencing traumatic mental health issues. And, that once they walk out of our doors, we knew we had no control or no ability to help that individual to stave off any potential actions and things of that nature.

And, so, we're at a crisis point. I'm not-- Again, counselors. I have a guidance counselor per every 280 kids; have not been able to add additional counselors because of the cut. And, so, any security funding to tie that to some mental health professionals within actual buildings who are working day to day with the kids is something that would actually work. And, again, the wellness assemblies -- we do all that already. The school district, we're all doing that. We spend more money on speakers and programs and assistance that there's at least one or two of those a month in every school.

And, so, I think the real worry here is that there's just not a concerted effort to tackle all the sort of extensions of the issues around safety

and security, which, certainly mental health concerns are a primary focus. But, we are hopeful--

SENATOR CRYAN: I'm sorry, if you could; I'm sorry.

This is Co-Chairman Cryan.

I don't-- You mentioned mental health in the report a little bit, but I thought we were focused on what this report was speaking to today. Is that correct?

DR. SAMPSON: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: I don't want to drift too far from it.

DR. SAMPSON: Well, mental health was a leading contributor to some of the activities that impacted the safety and security of schools. And, so, the report addressed the need to add mental health support. That's where we were going with that.

SENATOR CRYAN: We put a ton of money into mental health services for youth in the last budget, but I didn't pull numbers and the rest of that for this.

Can we just kind of stay on the report a little bit?

DR. SAMPSON: Sure.

So, the concern, though, was that there wasn't enough within the actual buildings themselves. And, staff -- professional staff -- and districts are making those difficult budgetary decisions. And, the safety and security aid that is a part of the annual budget that goes to school districts does not-- While it's welcome, it doesn't cover those costs of the staff or the infrastructure or any of those things.

And, so, just looking to tie that to some mental health experts as well as safety and security -- whether that's law enforcement; whether that's

S-3s; whether that's SROs, and you have a mixed bag with communities. I'm fortunate my municipality split the cost of SROs with me, but that is not the case across the state. And, so, districts also make hard decisions based on what the municipality has decided, whether or not they can afford that or need that. So, those are some of the ongoing concerns that the report uncovered as it relates to funding.

Nobody is questioning how much funding was put in. We know that a lot of money went in. We're just talking about how that money has actualized and what it actually means for the schools, and that's where we have some concerns.

DR. GARIBAY: Does anyone have any questions? I know you have the report, so we didn't want to go through the presentation of it, and whatnot.

Does anyone have any questions, or anything?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Let me open it up to-- I see Assemblywoman Jasey has her hand up.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Good morning, everybody.

So, the fact that we have so many districts -- I mean, 1,000 students in one district compared to how many, 21,000 in another district.

What is the relationship with law enforcement? Local law enforcement. Because I remember -- correct me if I'm wrong, Melanie -- but, I think we had a joint committee where we were focused, a number of years ago, where we traveled around and we were focused on school safety issues. It doesn't sound like too much has improved, and I know we're all kind of on the edge of our seats every time we hear about something happening somewhere else and thinking, "Thank God it's not here, but could it be?"

So, law enforcement -- local law enforcement. How is the relationship with them in your two districts?

DR. SAMPSON: We're fortunate, Assemblywoman Jasey. In the Freehold Regional area, our relations are exceptional.

What we found in the survey is that's not the case in a lot of these other communities, where some of the relationships are either non-existent because they're relying on the State Police, or fractured for some other difficulty amongst -- between the municipality and the school system. I wouldn't hedge that, I wouldn't know specifically, but I do know that those differences in relationships certainly impact the availability of the local law enforcement to respond, to be involved.

And, Dr. Garibay and I know that if an incident occurs in one of our schools, we'll have police on ground within three minutes. We know that. That was *not* the case in, particularly, many of the more rural school districts that responded to the survey. Their wait time was exponentially higher in some of those circumstances and was based on the availability of the State Police.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Thank you.

Senator Cryan.

SENATOR CRYAN: I had a few questions, just on the report themselves. And, I just want to understand the survey data.

So, for those with the report, just an explanation. On page 14 -- so, the districts that responded. Are they an accurate reflection of the diversity of the state?

DR. SAMPSON: Yes--

SENATOR CRYAN: OK--

DR. SAMPSON: So, you had-- And, we broke it out on what that response looked like by district type. So, we captured, I think, 232 of the school systems across the state.

SENATOR CRYAN: OK, and, how many school systems total?
(indiscernible)

DR. SAMPSON: Around 600.

SENATOR CRYAN: OK.

And, for example, I noticed -- and, again, staying on that page -- the district configuration, K-12, K-8.

So, just to understand, K-12 plus 9-12 is how I would look at it. Forty-five percent of those that responded out of high school? Is that correct? Just to understand it correctly?

DR. GARIBAY: No, there's different district configurations. So, if you were a chief school -- these went out to chief school administrators, your superintendents. So, if you were a district that was configured K-12, they're not included within the ones that are just 9-12. That's a separate district that would just be a 9-12 school district on its own.

DR. SAMPSON: But, they would both have high schools--

DR. GARIBAY: Right--

DR. SAMPSON: --obviously.

DR. GARIBAY: Right.

SENATOR CRYAN: So, to understand that high schools are represented, I would look at the 38.9 plus the 6.1, plus the 2.7, right?

So, it's an accurate-- 45% of high schools were reflected.

DR. GARIBAY: Right.

SENATOR CRYAN: I'm just trying to understand the data.

DR. GARIBAY: Yes--

DR. SAMPSON: Yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: And, on page-- I'm sorry, I'm looking at my notes. Any cost on the SLEO, on page 11, which I've got to flip to, because that's my question.

You know, the strongest recommendations of the Class IIIs or the SLEO. Did anywhere along the way -- and, I'm going to ask the same to -- is it Gara-bay, did I say that correctly?

DR. GARIBAY: Yes, that's correct.

SENATOR CRYAN: And, to Dr. Garibay's point earlier, schools were built before vestibules were needed. Some of these schools in the state of New Jersey are north of 100 years old, before anybody dreamed that somebody would come in and shoot up kids much less 15 years ago.

DR. GARIBAY: Correct.

SENATOR CRYAN: So, you know, there's infrastructure issues and response and all the things that go with that.

Either in the SLEOs or the Class IIIs, was there any cost estimates generated, or anything we could work from? And, the same in terms of school security figures for the bond issue, which I thought made some sense. I know, for example, the schools I have the privilege to represent are all built in a configuration that doesn't -- is no longer -- it wouldn't be what you would build today based on what we know.

DR. GARIBAY: No. And, I think--

SENATOR CRYAN: So, anything there?

DR. GARIBAY: Yes, so, I think that's a great -- great points you made.

The answer is no, and we have anecdotal data about what the hourly rate is for SLEOs and, like I said, as Dr. Sampson said, sometimes they cost share. I am also in a district that cost shares 50/50 for SLEOs, and some do, some don't. We did find that, but that could be the next step of our information seeking with regards to what are those next steps of a cost analysis for that. And, I think it had to even start-- We even had to back up with that with some-- Right after Sandy Hook, a lot of school districts went out and hired private security. That was something that was happening as well.

Now, I can only -- again, I am only speaking through my lens, that there is a concern through local law enforcement in response to private security, with complete respect to both entities, that they don't have the same training. There's not the same sustainability; there's not the same accountability when it goes to private security. So, I think that there's multiple layers -- like the onion. When we talk about cost, it depends on are we looking at private industry security, are we looking at public? You know, servants with regard to the SLEOs, with regard to the requirements, and a prevailing wage, as you will, for our officers at that time for SLEOs.

DR. SAMPSON: Senator, to that point, you know, with my eight communities, the cost is different per community depending on what they're paying their S3s and what we're-- We, our agreement is 50% school, 50% municipality, but those costs do differ from what they'll be -- what they pay their folks, so--

SENATOR CRYAN: -- so, they differ on wage-to-wage, but they also differ district-to-district.

DR. SAMPSON: Correct.

SENATOR CYRAN: (indiscernible) percentage, if any.

It might be one of those things that we think about, Chairlady, to ask the Department of Education to survey -- what was it, 42% of schools actually have security, actually have SLEOs? Was that the number in there?

DR. GARIBAY: Yes, I think you're correct, Senator. I can go back and look, yes.

SENATOR CRYAN: So, it might be one of those things that may be we want to think about, is asking for some sort of survey for cost estimates.

Last thing from me, and I don't want to dominate the hearing, but page 15 -- just help me a little bit. Two-sixty-two, there were three counties that had north of 30 responses: Burlington, Morris, and Monmouth. And, I think Bergen came pretty close. Do we have any concerns here in terms of the size of county, regionalization? I just want to make sure the data is actually reflective of the state. Not in a negative tone, but just to be sure what we're talking about is for everybody represented here on the committee.

Was there particularly low counties, or anybody that we should look at as being underrepresented in the survey? For example, Hudson only came back with four, which I thought was surprising.

DR. GARIBAY: Yes. Again, whenever we're looking at data and survey collection, you want to look at sampling size and your -- all of those things. So, this was our first attempt to gather that information, and I definitely think we're grateful to be working and partnering and communicate with this committee -- this joint committee -- to say, "What are the next steps?" We're coming with ideas to say, "What other information do we

need?” So, in our field, a lot of times we ask ourselves, “To what do we attribute the results of what we are doing?” whether it’s student assessments, whether it’s data that we’re collecting. And, there’s a lot of questions that came from this as well.

So, I think this is just step one of what this deeper dive into what school security looks like in New Jersey. And, so, it was just a first step. So, we’re completely open and receptive to what other information is needed and what we want to be able to make the best informed decisions about school security in New Jersey.

SENATOR CRYAN: Well, I’ve got to say thanks. I thought it was an eye-opening report, and I appreciate it very much.

Thank you.

DR. GARIBAY: Thank you, Senator.

DR. SAMPSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Thank you, Senator. Really great questions, too.

And, I was thinking the same thing. We-- I am in an urban area, but I also have rural areas as well. And, so, there’s this juggle between over-policing our schools with metal detectors, resource officers. How do you start your day off going through that, versus hearing and reading the report that some districts don’t even have police officers?

So, this is very, very sensitive; this is very alarming and concerning; but I also think that you’ve brought up some options -- what we *can* do, and looking forward to those next steps.

Assemblywoman Flynn, did you want to add anything?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: Yes, well, first I would like to thank my friends from Monmouth County for doing such a great job and calling us out.

As a former Board President, this was one of the things that I did in my first year as Board President, it was to -- and, I always give the Legislature big props for allowing schools to put classroom officers in our schools. In Holmdel School District, we were the subject of swatting, like, every Thursday, so our kids -- my kids -- grew up from village schools, the little schools, all the way up through that whole process, over years, where we were doing it. So, we were on the forefront of this. And, the Class III really put a person like me, who was in a position of having to make decisions, at ease that we knew we had school security. And, we also invested in a lot of the things that they're talking about.

And, so, as the Assemblywoman and the Chairwoman just said, it's startling to see no one is there yet, because we did that like, 10 years ago; eight years ago. And, it is an expensive proposition, so I do believe the Legislature do -- like Mr. Sampson said, he talked about the fact that we were giving them funding for mapping, but we did mapping eight, 10 years ago. So, we've already made those investments.

I have a question about the shatterproof or ballistic glass, employed in some manner. When you were getting that data back -- because this was a big topic and a big expense for us, which we did over years, and no one really likes us to talk about it as broadly, but it was done -- is that just in the vestibule areas, are you talking about the-- It was enveloping the school windows?

DR. SAMPSON: Yes, it's a mix. And, I'll use us as an example.

So, when we first did it in 2012, we didn't tell anybody, and we did. All of our open glass areas are cafeterias that were really exposed. But, we didn't want to make that public--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: Right--

DR. SAMPSON: --because we'd rather somebody come up and find out the hard way that it was there.

What ended up happening for us is, we're in -- now that's come due, that has a shelf life for 10 years, basically--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: Right--

DR. SAMPSON: --so, we're redoing it all. So, we paid twice for that at this point in time. And, districts -- that's also a sort of hyper-localized decision, what areas they did or didn't provide for shatter-proof glass.

So, we were just getting at whether or not they used it, but how it's implemented across the districts varies dramatically, I would imagine.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: OK.

That's why-- I'm sorry, go ahead, Doctor.

DR. GARIBAY: No, go ahead.

No, I would just like to point -- you made a great point -- Dr. Sampson just made -- about the shelf life of things.

So, many of the things that we do are not one-time purchases. I just had to replace all security cameras in my district, and we pulled out our reserves to do that, but when they go out in the weather, there's ongoing preventative -- not just preventative maintenance, but replacement of things. Things have a shelf life. (indiscernible), even when you have a WAVE alarm system, an alert system -- there's maintenance; there's upkeep; there's things. These things are tremendous investments that we're happy to make, but they

are, in fact, investments that are just not one-time purchases. Just like maintaining staff.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: Are you able to articulate for the Legislature how much of your budget is really spent on security, like these -- they're not hidden costs, because I don't want to say there's a lack of transparency, but to Dr. Sampson's point, when we did it in Holmdel, we weren't advertising we were doing a window replacement -- which, we did; we window replaced with security.

And, that's an expense I don't know -- if you're not an administrator, or one of the nine board members, no one really knows. So, I think it's great that you highlighted that in the report, and, also, I hope everyone understands it's a significant cost, because you also have to make a choice of what level of security you have to provide, and the costs are extreme.

So, I think in a future report, or, if we could, I think it would help the Legislature to see the real costs. I know in Holmdel, we have 3,000 students; we spend \$300,000 just on Class III officers who are there even after school for school activities. I had to berate the commissioners to ever contribute to it, so that \$300,000, for a long time, came out of the school budget. And, it usually does, as Dr. Sampson, you both say, it comes at the cost of a teacher or a program.

And, to Senator Cryan's point, we were also trying to invest in mental health needs at that time, too. So, all of these additional costs, I don't think people understand unless you're in the budget process year after year after year: It's hard to juggle all these costs. So, I think if there's some way we can kind of distill for the Legislature what it does really, what a budget really comes down to in these ways, I think it would help us understand when

we're having these discussions on funding and security, that's why. And, when we fund for one reason -- like, we funded for mapping while Monmouth County probably didn't get anything, because we do it; it's done. So, like, also providing grants opportunities.

And, I still sit here-- The last thing is, and I wanted to ask is, did the DOE give you any of this information? Because I think they do collect information on security in some way, shape, or form.

DR. SAMPSON: We didn't necessarily articulate with the DOE on this.

The potentially logical starting point is that 2015 report and to update that, and to bake a lot of the things you just talked about, Assemblywoman Flynn, into that report. And, the DOE has the power to compel answers, whereas MaryJane and I, we were literally calling colleagues saying, "Fill this out, we need your information."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: (laughter) I hope Mike Petrizzo filled it out, or I'll go yell at him in Holmdel.

But no, because it was -- like, our business administrator, you know, my legislators, I want you to know they stand on their heads to try to make this all work. Because you do get-- Every time we would get one of these events happening, these unfortunate events throughout the country, parents come to you really nervous -- very different levels of concern -- and you never want a kid to feel unsafe in school. That's, like, the worst thing.

So, that is why we made those investments, because we did not-- And, I've got to tell you, it made me feel 100% better once we had the Class IIIs in, the securities, I felt-- I mean, I still, sometimes I stop and think about how much better I feel, with my kids there, I really do feel like they're

safe. And, it also creates that close connection between the schools and law enforcement, and it's sad to hear there's schools that don't have that.

Thank you, everyone.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Thank you, Assemblywoman. I think your district is a great example of what can be done, what has been done, and be able to share with the rest of us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLYNN: I'd love to invite you all down. We can do that and pandemic recovery stuff. We've put a lot of money into that school.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Thank you.

I want to--

DR. GARIBAY: (indiscernible) -- I'm sorry, Assemblywoman; I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: No, no problem. Go ahead, Doctor.

DR. GARIBAY: I was going to say that with regard to the mapping that took place -- and, Dr. Sampson mentioned it, the mapping for the schools, which many of us invested in prior to money becoming available to do it -- but schools that already did it didn't receive back-funding for it. So, there was nothing that, like -- we laid that money out; we did that. We made that investment *again*.

But, as districts who hadn't done it then received money for it, it wasn't like -- we weren't able to even ask for reimbursement for it, it was -- so, that almost felt like we would have done something else or we could have supplemented something else. So, I think that consistency of conversation

for it, too, to say, “OK, we are making these investments,” so -- I don’t know, that was just another part that I found (indiscernible)--

DR. SAMPSON: At the end of the day, we-- Look, dollars are finite. We get it. And, everybody is asking for money. And, that’s why I think it behooves us to really be more strategic about the specific funds we’re asking for as it relates to security so that you cast the widest net across the districts; across the state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Thank you so much.

I want to see if any of our members have any other questions. I don’t see any hands. (no response)

OK. I guess final thoughts-- Oh, I see Assemblywoman Matsikoudis?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MATSIKOUDIS: Yes, thank you.

First of all, I want to thank you all for today. Thank you to Melanie for leading the efforts, and I am -- it’s so nice to see so many friends on this call, including my own superintendent -- I don’t know if he’s still on, but Dave Maceli.

I do actually have one question: How do your districts involve the broader community, including parents and others, into the ongoing discussions and actions related to school safety?

DR. SAMPSON: I’ll go.

For Freehold Regional, we have a pretty robust strategic planning process, and that is initially, in its impetus, developed by a wide swath of stakeholders from across the community that come together multiple times over the course of a year. Certainly some of the things that we’re doing as it

relates to security are part of that strategic plan, and obviously a whole host of other things.

But, that's, to me, utilizing a strategic plan with a clear process to gather community input has always been the best way to make sure that we're capturing as wide a range of voices as possible in the plans that we are implementing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MATSIKOUDIS: Absolutely, because I always feel like communication, really, is key.

And, you know, there's many short-term infrastructure fixes at our schools. I agree that the mental health aspect of school safety can't be understated enough, and we just need to ensure that counselors can work one on one with students, free from their burdensome paperwork and also have some trained professionals in our schools who can respond to the emerging mental health issue, which will also help with our safety within the schools.

Thank you, thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Well, thank you.

I want to thank our experts -- Melanie, Dr. Sampson, and Dr. Garibay -- for your leadership in this, and bringing us this information. This is only step one, you know. It's a lot to take in, and I've already-- Looking at our numbers in our district, I'm like, "That number is kind of low, I wonder if they even know about this report."

So, you've given us plenty of work to do to take back to our districts as well -- and, also, to our caucuses to be able to talk about how to fund this because this is probably going to have two commas in it, right -- it's going to cost a lot. We have great examples of districts that have already

been doing this work, but we have other districts that are far, far behind. And, even if you started in 2015, I'm sure it's time for an upgrade; I'm sure there's time for many infrastructure plans that need to be changed and updated.

So, we have a lot of work to do in this space, but I thank you for bringing this information to us.

Senator Cryan, do you have any other things that you want to add?

SENATOR CRYAN: No, just a very sincere thanks on a great discussion.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Yes, Melanie.

MS. SCHULZ: Well, I just want to thank you all for being on this call.

I have quite a few takeaways written down here. I will communicate with Becky, and then maybe we can get something together to send out to my members and to your members and look at what our-- I mean, we have next steps here that we need to take, and we'll have some asks for you.

So, again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for giving us this opportunity. I think it's really important. There's nothing more important than the safety and security of our little ones, our big ones, and our faculty.

So, thank you again.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN REYNOLDS-JACKSON: Oh, you're welcome.

And, look out. I'm sure Senator Cryan and I and our members have lots of ideas about how we can continue to have meetings for the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, and so look out for something maybe coming in either December or January for another meeting.

In the meantime, I thank you all, and be safe.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)