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# *Committee Meeting*

of

## SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*“The Committees will take public testimony on school security”*

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**LOCATION:** William G. Rohrer Center  
Camden County College  
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

**DATE:** April 9, 2018  
3:00 p.m.

### **MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES PRESENT**

Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Chair  
Senator James Beach  
Senator Samuel D. Thompson

Assemblywoman Pamela R. Lampitt, Chair  
Assemblyman Arthur Barclay  
Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling  
Assemblywoman Patricia Egan Jones  
Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson  
Assemblywoman Britnee N. Timberlake  
Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso  
Assemblyman David W. Wolfe



### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Erin M. Basiak  
Kathleen Fazzari  
Anita M. Saynisch  
*Office of Legislative Services  
Committee Aides*

Elizabeth Mahn  
*Senate Majority*  
Rebecca Panitch  
*Senate Republican  
Committee Aides*

Jade Mostyn  
*Assembly Majority*  
Natalie Ghaul  
*Assembly Republican  
Committee Aides*

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

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M. TERESA RUIZ  
Chair

SHIRLEY K. TURNER  
Vice-Chair

JAMES BEACH  
MICHAEL J. DOHERTY  
SAMUEL D. THOMPSON

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**New Jersey State Legislature**  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
STATE HOUSE ANNEX  
PO BOX 068  
TRENTON NJ 08625-0068

**COMMITTEE NOTICE**

**TO:** MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ, CHAIRWOMAN  
ASSEMBLYWOMAN PAMELA R. LAMPITT, CHAIRWOMAN

**SUBJECT:** COMMITTEE MEETING - APRIL 9, 2018

*The public may address comments and questions to Kathleen Fazzari, Anita Saynisch, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Larkin Cugnitti, Secretary, at (609)847-3850, fax (609)984-9808, or e-mail: OLSAideAED@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.*

The Senate Education Committee and the Assembly Education Committee will meet on Monday, April 9, 2018 at 3:00 PM at Camden County College, William G. Rohrer Center, 1889 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08003.

Students, parents, and other members of the public are invited to provide their thoughts and recommendations on issues related to school security.

Individuals wishing to testify are requested to register by calling (609) 847-3850 and should provide 20 written copies of the testimony to the committees on the day of the meeting. Persons who are not presenting oral testimony may submit written testimony for consideration by the committees and inclusion in the record by e-mailing a committee aide.

Issued 4/2/18

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Donald A. Borden President Camden County College	2
William P. Monaghan Chief of Police Cherry Hill Township	6
Joseph N. Meloche, Ed.D. Superintendent Cherry Hill School District	9
Amy Jablonski Member Board of Education Chesterfield Township School District	20
Carlyne B. Turner-Beverly, Esq. Legislative Committee Chair Burlington-Willingboro Chapter Jack and Jill of America, Inc.	25
Candace Beverly Private Citizen	26
Kathleen Devlin Private Citizen	30
Frances Koukotas Director Network of Catholic School Families Diocese of Trenton	34
Edward Zebedies President Board of Education Weymouth Township School District	36

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
W. Harry Earle Chief of Police Gloucester Township Police Department	40
David Rossi Private Citizen	47
Christopher Benedetto Private Citizen	47
John Wachter Representing Dynamic Defense Material (DDMAT)	55
Thomas Macauley Chief Sheriff's Office Camden County	55
Daniel Steinmetz Private Citizen	59
Robert Lipinski Private Citizen	60
Brian C. Kovacs Founder Strategic Ops Group	60
Jesston Wilson Representing Strategic Ops Group	62
Rick Short Private Citizen	64
Lori Alhadeff Private Citizen	65

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Page</u>
<b>APPENDIX:</b>	
Testimony submitted by Chief William A. Monaghan	1x
Testimony submitted by Amy Jablonski	3x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by Carlyne B. Turner-Beverly, Esq.	5x
Testimony submitted by Candace Beverly	9x
Testimony submitted by Kathleen Devlin	10x
Testimony submitted by Frances Koukotas	11x
Testimony submitted by Edward Zebedies	15x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by W. Harry Earle	17x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by Christopher Benedetto	26x

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)**

**APPENDIX (continued)**

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
Testimony submitted by Chief Thomas Macauley	28x
Testimony, plus attachments submitted by Brian C. Kovacs	29x
Statement submitted by Patrick R. Brannigan Executive Director New Jersey Catholic Conference	32x
pnf: 1-80	

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN PAMELA R. LAMPITT (Chair):**

Good afternoon, everybody.

I'm Assemblywoman Pam Lampitt. I thank you all for coming.

We're going to have to do a little bit of formalities, as we typically do, during a Committee hearing. We're going to take a roll call first.

Kath; thank you.

MS. FAZZARI (Committee Aide): Senator Beach.

SENATOR BEACH: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Senator Ruiz.

**SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Chair):** Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman DiMaso.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Senator Thompson.

MS. FAZZARI: Senator Thompson; I apologize, Senator. I missed you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Lampitt.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Here.

We're good? Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: What about me?

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblyman Houghtaling; I'm sorry, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Well, we're in the home of Camden County College, and we certainly want to thank them and their staff.

But we wanted to offer the President of Camden County College, President Borden, an opportunity just to speak for a minute. (applause)

**P R E S I D E N T   D O N A L D   A .   B O R D E N:** (off mike) You don't need to come up there, do you?

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: No.

HEARING REPORTER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: You can speak right there.

MR. BORDEN: Most of you don't know me, but my history is a public school Administrator. I served as a high school principal in two different high schools in Camden County; I've been a Superintendent. So I can't imagine a more critically important topic to address.

Certainly, we would share, with any community partner, this facility. But it is a great opportunity to address such an important topic, so we're glad we were able to have you all here. And I hope this proves to be productive for everybody involved.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, President.

First and foremost, I really want-- This doesn't happen without a lot of people behind all of it; taking a Committee on the road is a lot of work. So I certainly want to thank the Camden County College staff, Kathleen Dawson-Faul and Kay Byrd, who have been our point people here; thank you very much.

I certainly want to thank the Majority Office for coordinating all of this. This is, as you know, possibly a three-day event. We held a hearing last week in Trenton; we're in Cherry Hill, obviously, today; and in a few weeks, we're going to be in Senator Ruiz's area in Newark, to be able to conduct another hearing up there.

So I want to thank Kathy Fazzari, especially, for doing this, for planning and doing all the coordination.

For many of you who have never been to a Committee hearing, we are talking about public safety; we're talking about school safety. If you have come to talk about other issues, I will probably cut you off, or the Senator will cut you off. If you want to specifically address the cost of how to protect our schools, we're here to listen to that as well.

There are a lot of people who want to testify today. We ask that you-- Many of you have brought some remarks that have been prepared. You might be sharing them with us; we encourage you to do so. If you don't have prepared remarks and would like to follow up with some information, you could send it to Jade or Kathy at the Majority Office and OLS; and provide the information to us as well.

We ask that you not read your prepared remarks; really, speaking from the heart and speaking from your own intelligence on this matter really provides us the better insight to what we're trying to achieve here.

We heard a tremendous amount last week; we heard from the educators who are the authorities, from the Commissioner to Homeland Security. We garnered a lot of information. But we really wanted to take it to the community.

I think we all know that our prayers are with the Parkland families; they're with the Sandy Hook families; they're with Columbine families; they're with the families that lost loved ones in Las Vegas and in Florida. This is something that we are taking, obviously, very seriously; and we know that there has been a lot of great work done. And what we've learned, too, is that the collaborative work that can get done, and the shared work that can get done -- what you can learn from each other, from inside this room, is something that we know that there will be a really great takeaway from this afternoon.

So we ask that you not read your testimony; we're limiting you to 3 to 4 minutes to give your remarks. We're going to allow the panel to ask questions. Certainly, the members -- we ask that you not be redundant in your questions; and we will get through this day.

I'd like to introduce, to my right, Senator Teresa Ruiz; who I have gotten to know and respect in her work, previously and consistently, on education.

Senator.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Chairwoman Lampitt.

I'm not going to be long; just to echo the same sentiments as my Vice Chair -- Co-Chair, rather, here.

I'm encouraged -- she reached out, just about a month ago, to talk about what did I think about, you know, preparing three meetings throughout the state to discuss this issue. And I thought it was a great idea; so I want to commend her for her effort on reaching over and bringing us together.

I, too, just want to expand on some of the sentiment. Our hearts go out to any family who has lost a loved one to gun violence. As I said in the first hearing, gun violence is a public health crisis that impacts many of our neighborhoods here in the State of New Jersey. On a national level, now, we're seeing catastrophes in ways like we never have seen before. And certainly as mothers, we know that we don't want to drop our children off in any school environment or any environment and not be able to pick them up at the end of the day from an activity; or get a text or a phone call that the location is on lockdown.

So I look forward to engaging, really, in a discussion. Because I think for all of us up here, it's better than to just read the testimony; for us to really engage in back-and-forth, so we can learn from the experts in the room, so that we can create better policy and protect all of our children here in the Garden State.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

And we were just joined by Assemblywoman Patricia Egan Jones; she just came down from Trenton from the Budget hearing.

Thank you for coming; we appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We are going to start off with Joe Meloche, Superintendent of Cherry Hill Schools; and Chief William Monaghan, who is the Cherry Hill Police Chief.

You're going to come down together.

And if I can just say, on a personal note, I've known Joe for a very long time; and he's been a guardian of my children, And I certainly

say sometimes that my son, Andrew, probably would have never graduated high school if it wasn't for Joe. (laughter)

Go ahead, gentlemen.

**CHIEF WILLIAM P. MONAGHAN:** Chairwoman Ruiz, Chairwoman Lampitt, members of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees, my name is William Monaghan. I'm the Chief of Police in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

I supplied you with just a brief overview of some of the things that I would like to discuss with you today. And I just want to give you a brief introduction to some of the issues that we face here in Cherry Hill.

Cherry Hill Township is a diverse community, made up of many faiths and backgrounds. The Township is approximately 24 square miles, with a residential bedtime population of around 75,000 people.

Our daytime population can balloon to around 250,000 people. The Cherry Hill Mall itself attracts approximately 10 million visitors to this Township each and every year. So we have a lot of foot traffic and people through the Township.

The District itself -- Cherry Hill Township -- has 41 schools within the borders of the Township. Approximately half of our schools are public schools; the rest, because of our diverse faith backgrounds, are private academies, different religious schools.

So we have a large undertaking, from a security standpoint, from a police perspective.

And I'm sure that you're looking at a police officer sitting here, and you're going to think that I'm going to talk about a police response to

an active shooter situation. And that is the furthest thing that I want to talk about today.

If we sit here and focus on a police response to an active shooter situation, we're accepting failure; because we basically have done nothing to prevent an incident from occurring. We're throwing up the white flag, and an incident has occurred.

We need to focus our attention on preventative measures that can take place before an incident occurs. And there are multiple steps and layers to security that we can work on before a police response is needed.

One of those is a need for assessment and security reviews. In Cherry Hill, like I said, with 41 schools, our buildings are of various different ages. Some brand new, like you're seated in here today; and others that were built in the 1950s. So there needs to be funding associated so we can look at the buildings and do proper assessments of what's going on.

We need systems for anonymous reporting. Security starts with every single person in our community; it doesn't rest solely on the backs of law enforcement. We need people to feel comfortable in contacting law enforcement organizations or governmental organizations to report suspicious behavior so that we can take preventative measures or preventive action and, again, stop something before it occurs.

That starts with building relationships in the community. We have a great relationship with our school district, with our Superintendent. We also have great relationships with our private institutions. Those conversations, those relationships are extremely important to build the comfort level for people to come to us to tell us if a child is having an issue,

if a parent is having an issue -- so that we can take the appropriate measures.

Police, and mental health, and social services must collaborate and work together to ensure protection of civil rights and human rights for everyone.

There are multiple different, varying opinions for police in schools; and police in schools is not the final answer. So in order to ensure that everyone feels protected, we need to make sure that we are all on the same page when we put a police officer into a school environment.

The security measures that we put in schools should not detract from the learning environment. We shouldn't be in a school and make it feel like a security institution; that's not the purpose. It should be an SRO-type environmental, where the children have relationships with the officers.

We need to ensure consistent training on conflict de-escalation and techniques, as well as mental health. One of the things that we face on a consistent basis in law enforcement is response to mental health issues -- people who are in crisis. Due to a lack of government funding for mental health, when we take people to a crisis center, they're back out on the street within two to three hours. The officers aren't even done with the paperwork, and the person is back out on the street. So if you're investigating ways to enhance school security, mental health and mental health funding, outside of the school environment, is extremely important.

And finally, grants should be explored by the Committee that are available and recurring, on a recurring basis, to use towards infrastructure upgrades, security officers, as well as training and mental health.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

**SUPERINTENDENT JOSEPH N. MELOCHE, Ed.D.:**

So, thank you, Chief Monaghan.

As the Superintendent of the Cherry Hill Public School District, I'm incredibly honored to be here today to represent the more than 11,000 students and more than 1,600 employees of the Cherry Hill Public Schools.

There are members of the community who are with us this afternoon, and members of the Board of Education. And on their behalf, I'm thrilled to offer some testimony.

First and foremost, I'm incredibly grateful to Chief Monaghan, and to the men and women of the Cherry Hill Police Department, for the role that they have in our schools. The presence of Cherry Hill police officers in our schools is not something that is new; the Police Department here in the Township I know has adopted a community policing premise, and they are in our schools on a regular basis.

That has been enhanced. We have taken a number of steps, following the tragedy that took place in Parkland. We had some very open and some very public conversations with members of our community, and especially with our children, to hear how it impacted them, how it affected them, what it looks like for them on a daily basis coming into our schools.

We have 19 schools, right? We're the 12th largest school district in the state. And I'll tell you that our schools are safe; they are, and they can be safer. There is more work that we can do.

Following that tragedy, one of the enhancements that took place is Cherry Hill Police Department has provided nine police officers who are in our schools on a daily basis, now through the end of the academic year. That is not sustainable; but through the work of the Town Council, and the Mayor, and the Chief, they were able to do that through overtime and for reassignment for deployments.

We, as a school district, are looking to arm our campus police officers. In fact, the Board of Education, during our March cycle-- Because we have four campus police officers in the District, changed policy. So we'll be looking to arm the four campus police officers that we have, as well as to hire five additional campus police officers for the 2018-2019 academic year.

And the reason we are doing this is because we believe that the people who are involved in working with the children on a daily basis are the most important resource that we have. As a school district, we have adopted that as our idea and as our perspective, in terms of how we spend our funds. And funds are an issue; we know that as educators, the most important relationship that exists, in terms of a child's achievement in school, is between that child and the teacher in his classroom or the child and the teacher in her classroom.

We have focused our attention on hiring staff and having the appropriate level of staff at the elementary, the middle, and the high school level. We are increasing that with the addition of campus police officers next year. And we'll be able to train them. We spent a great deal of time focusing on character, on cultural proficiency, and on equity in terms of how we interact with our population. Cherry Hill is dramatically different in 2018 than it was in 1977, when my parents brought my brother, and

sister, and me from Detroit. It's a different place; it's a dramatically better place today than it was then.

One of the challenges that we face, though, honestly, does come back to money. Because as the Chief talked about, our schools were designed in the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1960s. And frankly, the world looked different in 1965 or in 1955, than it does in 2018. Forget about how we approach education; the pedagogical approaches that we take with our children, where the needs are being met on a daily basis. But just, in fact securing the building -- what does that look like? It's dramatically different today; dramatically different.

One of the things that we have to be able to count on is a consistent source of funding that comes from the State. As we prepare our 2018-2019 academic year budget, 91 percent -- 91 percent of the budget for Cherry Hill will come from Cherry Hill. That's about 86 percent that will be raised through the local tax levy, and an additional 5 percent that we will carry over from this year to next year. That's dramatic. We receive less than 50 cents on the dollar that we should receive from the State for our funding. When we can't count on that funding, it makes an impact. Because again, we know the most important thing that we can focus on is the relationship that exists between the adults and the folks who are in our buildings.

So please, any impact you can make towards that, with that funding being consistent, allowing us to count on it-- We can take the security measures we'd like to take; we can do enhancements and upgrades to our buildings. We have a huge referendum that will come out on October 2 of this year, where we will, again, go out and ask the folks in

Cherry Hill to support work that needs to be done. Safety and security is the primary focus of that referendum.

And then just the infrastructure -- just the realities of the infrastructure -- the heating the pipes, the sewer -- all that needs to be addressed, has to be addressed.

The second piece -- because money is a huge piece -- the second piece, honestly, that I believe you, as our legislators in the State, can make a dramatic impact on is give us the power and the ability to screen our children. We do not have that ability. We can screen our kids for dyslexia, we can do height, we can do weight, we can test their eyes. There are all kinds of things that we can do. We are not allowed to screen them, because we're an active consent state. Allow us to screen our children. And when we talk to parents, when we talk to the community-- As the discussions took place over the course of the last six weeks, it's one of the things that really came to a head, came to the forefront. People constantly demand, people constantly ask for -- we need to screen the kids. The challenge with it is, nobody is saying, "I want my kids screened." They want *your* kids screened and the other person's kids screened.

Allow us. We have the professionals in the public school systems and in our buildings to screen the children; and then provide appropriate follow up and direct the children and the families to appropriate additional resources. You, as our legislators, can make that difference. Because as the Chief talks about-- I'm thankful that the Chief, and the men, and the women of the Department are here. I feel safe in our buildings on a daily basis; I feel safe with my children being in the District

on a daily basis, because they provide that for us. But there are kids who we can support; there are families that we can support.

One of the hardest things that I ever have to deal with as an educator is the sudden loss of a staff member or, more importantly, of a child. It's incredibly devastating. And there are natural orders to things when that happens with adults and, sadly, with illness with children. When we lose children to mental illness and to suicide, it's tragic; incredibly tragic. I've sat with parents, I've sat with classmates; and we've talked about never allowing it to happen again. And what can we do differently? Allow us -- please, give us an opportunity; as legislators you can make that difference. Allow us to screen these children and provide the supports that they need.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Joe.

And unfortunately, I've been in the same situation with Joe, in the same room, listening to parents when a child has committed suicide in Cherry Hill.

But I agree with you that Cherry Hill is very safe -- thank you, Chief Monaghan, thank you to the officers of Cherry Hill. They live in our community -- an officer lives across the street from me -- so they live in our community as well.

I just want to make note that Assemblyman Barclay joined us; thank you. Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson and Assemblywoman Timberlake -- thank you very much; they also joined us.

Teresa, you have a question?

SENATOR RUIZ: I do.

At the last meeting that we heard -- and this is not to have a cookie-cutter approach, statewide -- but we did get the impression -- and I

don't recall who it was -- but they wanted at least one basic direction from the State of New Jersey, through the DOE, as far as what they should be doing for public safety. Do you think it would helpful if that was just set as a benchmark? Of course, every district could go above and beyond. But the conversation was kind of around the fact that everybody does things differently -- which is important, because all of our campuses don't look alike, and our communities don't look alike -- so there has to be some uniqueness to our approach. But does it make sense to, at least, come together and have one basic benchmark, so that we're there, and then districts can peg off of that to figure out what works best for their school communities.

DR. MELOCHE: So Senator, I think that any discussion that moves forward to identify what could be best practices -- both in terms of physical structure and practices with access to a building and what goes on in a building during the course of a day -- is a great movement forward. The challenge I think that we have is that if a mandate comes down and says, "Every building will have *this*," or "Every building will have *that*"--

So there's a financial piece that's there. And then, just as you talked about, the reality of-- Schools look so dramatically different, from Cape May to up to the north, in terms of what is actually going on. But I think best practices -- this is what developmentally is appropriate for children, in terms of what goes on in a building, and this is what we can all provide in terms of access to a building -- I think that's a fantastic step.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes; you mentioned the State does not allow screening; one of you did.

DR. MELOCHE: I did; yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Screening for--

DR. MELOCHE: For mental health.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

DR. MELOCHE: It requires active consent from parents; so we cannot just screen kids. So, as an example: We offer mental health screening at our high school level; we've done it for years. And Pam talked about when the kids were in the high school-- You know, typically, we get less than 15 percent of parents who will sign off on their children being screened.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay; thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblyman Houghtaling.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Thank you.

For the Superintendent.

DR. MELOCHE: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Under current law, the Superintendent is required to appoint the School Safety Specialist for the District.

DR. MELOCHE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: And I was just wondering what your thoughts are; I think you're required now to appoint a School Administrator -- if you have any thoughts on that.

DR. MELOCHE: I do; thank you. Thank you for bringing that up, actually.

Because of the size of our District, we actually have a District Director of Security, a gentleman named Anthony Saporito. Mr. Saporito retired from the Cherry Hill Police Department three years ago, and literally held every position in the Department except for Chief; incredibly qualified.

At this point, I'm not able to appoint him as the District Security Specialist; so I'll appoint our Business Administrator, and yet we'll still request that Mr. Saporito be able to go to the training.

I think that there are districts like ours, because of our size, that have positions like that. I don't think that the mandate for us to appoint somebody who is certificated is doing us any good,

This man's expert -- his expertise-- It's his background. It would behoove us for that opportunity to be there.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Thank you.

DR. MELOCHE: Thanks for asking.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblywoman Jones.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: Switching mikes. (laughter)

Okay; I think I'm close enough.

First of all, I want to say thank you to both the Superintendent and the Chief. I have two grandchildren who I actually sat down and talked to yesterday about school security. And they pretty much feel safe. One is in middle school, one is in an elementary school. There have been some little grimaces along the way; but they both feel safe. They see the security officer, particularly in the middle school; they know why they're there. When they have to have a drill, they don't seem to feel the slightest bit

uncomfortable. The elementary school gal was ticking off, “We have a one, a two, and a three,” and I thought she was the teacher of the class at that moment, and I was one of her students.

But it is a concern for parents -- how children react in these drills that we have. And so I’m happy to see you guys are really-- I think you’re right on it.

If you aren’t allowed to *do* the screening, can you *recommend* screening, so that if a family failed to do the screening you would be able to take some further action, as opposed to you’re just automatically being able to do it?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: So what we know is the American Academy of Pediatrics has determined that children over the age of 12 should be evaluated for their behavioral and mental health during a well visit until they get to be 18 years of age. It requires legislation to create that mandate; not only for the State Health Benefits Plan, but for the ERISA plans as well, for that to occur. And we’re working on that.

And so, you know, if that would occur, it would take away the mandate within the schools. We feel, I feel, I think many of us would feel it should be done in the pediatrician’s office. Yes, Cherry Hill West has done this every year since my children were there. My children participated; but it was my willingness to be able to do so. But I do feel it should be done in the pediatrician’s office, and that’s the way that we should be moving forward with that issue.

Teresa, you had a question; then a follow-up.

SENATOR RUIZ: I’m just confused.

DR. MELOCHE: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Your inability to hire the Public Safety Director -- is it something that's keeping you--

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: By law.

DR. MELOCHE: So by the way that it's described through the Department of Ed, it has to be somebody who has a certificate. So my Director of Security--

SENATOR RUIZ: Is it -- do we know if it's a-- Does anyone know if it's a reg or a statute?

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: No, it's law.

SENATOR RUIZ: It's a law -- it's an actual law?

DR. MELOCHE: It's new.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Something I think we need to implement, on a statewide basis, is a program in all school districts to advise the school children that false threat of alarms are not pranks. I mean, to get a half-a-day out of school, or one thing or another, is not a prank; it causes great alarm for a large number of people -- parents, children, etc.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Senator, can you move the microphone closer to you?

SENATOR THOMPSON: As I was saying, I think we need to implement, statewide, a program to emphasize to the school children that fake false alarms are not pranks; that there can be serious consequences of them. Because when one is made, of course, all the kids in the school get upset, the faculty gets upset, the families, etc. And it diminishes the reaction that comes when there's a real threat; because the first thing -- "Well, is this real or not?" and etc.

And after Parkland, the number of those that we had throughout the state -- a tremendous number of them. So I think we need to get the word out to the children that, "Hey, no, you do not do that; and if you do that, there will be serious consequences."

CHIEF MONAGHAN: Well, we do address that, sir, during assemblies at the schools. And you touched on police response to a threat; and we treat every threat as if it was real, and we do prosecute the offenders once they're identified.

And then you touched on the drills at the schools. Every person in this room is a victim of gun violence; every person in this room is a victim of school violence, whether you have a student in a school, whether your grandchild is in a school, whether a relative is in a school. Because you touched on feelings of anxiety during an incident. Every child in every district is traumatized by this, whether they come out and tell you or not. When we have to come in to a school and teach children and teachers how to hide in case someone is coming in to kill them, we have a problem, and we need to address it. And everyone in this country is a victim of this violence.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Thank you very much for your testimony--

DR. MELOCHE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: --and for being here. We really, truly appreciate it.

DR. MELOCHE: Thank you for having us.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Next, we're going to have Amy Jablonski, a parent and a member of the School Board of the Chesterfield School.

Hi.

AMY JABLONSKI: Good morning -- or good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Good afternoon.

MS. JABLONSKI: Oh, my gosh it's been a long day.

Good afternoon.

Did you want me to just go ahead and start?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Yes.

MS. JABLONSKI: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: And if you could not read; just--

MS. JABLONSKI: Yes, I will.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: --speak from--

MS. JABLONSKI: So my name is Amy Jablonski, and I'm the parent of two children who attend Chesterfield Elementary School. I'm also a member of the Chesterfield Township Board of Education.

And in my day job, I'm a high school Assistant Principal; so I do a lot with school security just as a part of my regular responsibilities.

Chesterfield, for those who don't know, is the lowest-funded school district in the state. And so I can tell you, without hesitance, that New Jersey doesn't have a school security problem; what it has is a school funding problem.

Because in response to the most recent shooting, I looked at what districts have been doing statewide, out of an outcry from parents, to find out what's going on with school security.

And so I looked at one District that is in our District -- District 12, which is Manalapan-Englishtown. And Manalapan is funded at 300 percent of what they are entitled to under the SFRA. And so when I looked at what they did at their School Security Night, and compared it with Chesterfield, I think it's very clear how school funding is impacting school security.

So at Manalapan, on this funding (*sic*) night, they calmed the parents who had attended by explaining to them that they have HD camera systems in every building in their District. And they reminded parents that police have access to their closed system surveillance. They talked with parents about -- that they have installed sirens in noisy places like lunchrooms; and flashing lights in rooms that aren't typically locked, like a bathroom; so that if there is a lockdown, students will know what to do without having to go into the hallway and compromise themselves.

They have a school communication system which allows for individual teachers to call lockdowns, if necessary, which alert authorities and shortened response time.

And these are all related security measures that were recommended in July 2015 by the New Jersey School Security Task Force.

And then what I did was compare that with the resources that we have at Chesterfield Elementary School. And for the better part of a decade, because we've been so underfunded -- and the average is about 10 percent of what we're entitled in uncapped aid -- our children in

Chesterfield have none of the school security measures that they have at Manalapan-Englishtown.

So our school's security systems are primitive at best, and sorely in need of modernization. We have a door access system -- a swipe-key system -- but it runs on Windows XP; and it's so old that no one will service it. So it's going to cost us about \$9,000 to fix it, and we simply don't have that money in our budget.

We have a camera system; but it's an analog system. It can locate the presence of a body; it cannot make an ID of who that person is. We very recently had a situation at recess, where we had a person who was on the property who wasn't supposed to be there. Our school security cameras were completely ineffective in us being able to investigate that situation.

In order to just get us, kind of, up and running on upgrading that camera system, it will cost us \$10,000; and that's money that we don't have.

Furthermore, our school is understaffed in addressing the mental health needs of our student population. So we have 762 students, and we employ one full-time guidance counselor. The American School Counselor Association recommends one counselor for every 250 students. So our one counselor is doing the work of three.

And virtually no money exists for preventative measures, things like character education, PBSIS, student wellness, restorative discipline. All of those are things that improve your school connectedness and reduces the opportunity for incidents to occur, mostly because faculty and adults really

get to know your kids, and they're alerted to changes of behavior that might occur.

As you can see, our safety systems are badly in need of modernization, and we are woefully understaffed. However, when your district can't find the money for small thing -- like updating a 12-year-old Social Studies curriculum, and you pay for your PARCC technology with Box Tops, and you use your money from the Book Fair to pay for your STEM carts -- finding the \$20,000 that we would need to do these very minimal upgrades to our school security system is unreachable for us.

And in preparing for this testimony I conferenced with the Chesterfield School Principal, because I wanted to find out from him if he looked into some of the other technologies that many districts use -- things, like, at the elementary school that are very important, like swiping IDs of visitors who come into the building to make sure that they're not someone who shouldn't be having access to students. He said -- his response was, "We literally can't afford to update the system that will open the doors to the school." So he wouldn't even have asked about those kinds of extra technologies because, for us, those things are so far out of our reach.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Amy, if you could just wrap up.

MS. JABLONSKI: Okay.

The fact of the matter is that districts that are adequately funded have the luxury of being able to afford state-of-the-art security. Combined with a school security plan that is carefully crafted and implemented with best practice in mind, this is what consistently keeps kids safe. Why is the safety of one child worth 300, 400, or 500 percent

funding; but the safety of that child (indicates), who is here with me, is worth only 20 percent funding? Is her life worth less? Is any child's life worth less?

I think the answer to that is "no."

And the Governor, I know, has proposed including \$66 million in increased funding for school security. And supposedly, this is to allow individual districts the flexibility to support their own school safety initiatives. And I would request that the additional funding -- whether it's for school security aid or otherwise -- follow the lead of what you all did in the Legislature last -- late spring and early summer. And it should be allocated to districts based on funding deficit, so that the districts that have, -- because of our funding woes, not been able to update our security, will be able to bring us up to speed with where other districts are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Amy, very much.

MS. JABLONSKI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Any questions? (no response)

I think we all agree.

MS. JABLONSKI: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I think that Chief--

MS. JABLONSKI: I know you're sick of hearing about school funding, especially those of you who heard from me this morning. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: No, we're not; no, no.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Well, of course, I have heard this testimony before.

MS. JABLONSKI: And you have heard from me many times; we're best friends over the phone. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I think it coincides with what Chief Monaghan says. It's about assessment, and I think that we all can agree that it is determined upon the assessment of the schools, which is what you're bringing to light.

MS. JABLONSKI: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: So this is why the shared information is so vital -- to be able to connect the stories.

MS. JABLONSKI: Yes. And one of the things that I noticed as I reviewed the School Security Task Force recommendations is that many of them noted that they weren't things that they felt needed to be mandated; but they were things that should be left up to individual districts to make the determination about how much money they wanted to spend on these different technologies. And choice is a luxury, is what I would say to that.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

We have Carlyne Beverly and Candace Beverly; parent and her daughter.

Welcome, and thank you for coming.

CARLYNE TURNER-BEVERLY, Esq.: Thank you very much.

To the Committee Chairpersons, and Committee members--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Have a seat.

MS. TURNER-BEVERLY: --my name is Carlyne Beverly. And I'm actually going to yield my time--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: All right.

MS. TURNER-BEVERLY: --to my daughter, who is 11 years old. She worked very hard on preparing a statement that is in her own voice; gathering and processing her own feelings.

So I am going to respectfully request that she be permitted to present the statement in its entirety.

SENATOR RUIZ: Of course.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Of course; thank you.

MS. TURNER-BEVERLY: Thank you very much.

**C A N D A C E B E V E R L Y:** Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: You're welcome.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

MS. BEVERLY: Greetings to Senator Ruiz, Chair of the Senate Education Committee; Assemblywoman Lampitt, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee; Committee members, staff, and guests.

My name is Candace Beverly, and I want to thank you very much for letting me to speak to you today.

I am 11 years old, and I am in the 5th grade at Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart in Princeton. I am a member of the Burlington-Willingboro Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Incorporated, in Burlington County.

My Jack and Jill Chapter encourages me and other members to educate ourselves about important issues, to figure out what matters most to us, and to speak up about the changes we want to see in the world. I

know that I speak for myself, other Jack and Jill youth, and many other children and adults when I say that we need to make schools safer and wipe out gun violence in schools.

I have lived through many lockdown drills in school. It is scary to curl up in a ball, in a small space, and to try to be invisible and completely silent, all while dealing with fears about whether the danger is real. Is it just a drill or is there an intruder? Is there an active shooter? And if it is just a drill this time, is real-life danger lurking right around the corner?

Many students have faced violence in schools, and it hasn't been a drill. The danger has been real and deadly. Seventeen students died at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018. I am at a point where I can't help getting news headlines stuck in my head. I know that CNN has reported that 20 school shootings have happened at high schools and colleges between January and March of 2018. New Jersey is not on the CNN list; however, I have read that there has been an increase in New Jersey of bomb threats against schools, and threats to bring guns into schools. This is terrifying. It is too much to deal with, and we can't go on like this.

As they have said in Parkland, I say to you, "Enough is enough."

I am looking to you, Senators and Assembly members, to protect the students of New Jersey. The kids of New Jersey are counting on you to put an end to the terror and the fear. I have read that lawmakers are thinking about requiring panic buttons in schools, and plan to stop

investing tax money in companies that make guns. This is good, but I don't think it's enough. I think there are two things that will make schools safer.

First, the State of New Jersey needs to make it harder for people to get guns. I know that there are some people who feel like they need to have a gun for self-defense; but there are others who get guns because they have an evil intent to kill. We need you to pass laws that will help stop guns from falling into the wrong hands.

Second, the State of New Jersey needs to do more to focus on the mental health of students. There are students, like me, who are dealing with a lot of worries about the dangers that face our schools, and the State should offer programs and resources to help us cope with our feelings.

Also, some people who have used guns in schools were students themselves, who were dealing with bullying, and depression, and other mental health issues. The State should make sure that there are resources to help students who have these problems, to keep them from becoming the active shooters of tomorrow.

My Jack and Jill Chapter believes that there is one legislative bill that would help with this issue. Assembly Bill A-1114 was passed by the Assembly in June of 2017, and is currently being considered by the Senate Education Committee. This Bill would require schools to train students how to behave with the police. The Bill emphasizes that interactions with the police should be based on mutual respect and would encourage students to view police in a positive way, as trusted allies. If schools train students to show respect, in the way required by Bill A-1114, there will be many positive effects that will carry over into other areas.

When schools do a better job of teaching students to show respect, we will see less rule-breaking, less suspensions, less bullying, and less gun violence.

I hope that the members of the Senate Education Committee will support Bill A-1114, and will introduce it for a Senate vote very soon.

In conclusion, I want to thank you again for letting me speak, and I hope that you will join with me and the children of New Jersey by saying, "Enough is enough."

Please protect our schools.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Candace--

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Candace, your mother should be proud, New Jersey should be proud, the Jack and Jill organization is proud, we're all proud of you.

And your words are not on deaf ears. *Enough is enough*; I think we all, collaboratively, will say that with you. And we all take your words to heart.

And when it comes from an 11-year-old, it really brings, you know -- right here, to our heart as well.

We are very proud of you; very brave; very eloquently said and very passionately written.

MS. BEVERLY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Anybody have any questions for Candace?

Did you want to say anything?

SENATOR THOMPSON: No; I would just say if there is not a sponsor for Senate Bill A-1114, I'll be happy to sponsor it. I don't know whether there is one.

SENATOR RUIZ: I think it's a different bill number now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Yes; I think so, too.

There will be a new bill number; but that was last year's bill number. But I think that you can get unanimous support on that piece of legislation, Candace. And certainly, as it's going through, you know, we'll try to keep you in touch about what's going on, okay? Would you like to do that, and be able to come up and testify in Trenton, and be able to see this Bill go through? That would be great.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Candace.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Yes, thank you.

MS. BEVERLY: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Great job.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Next, we're going to hear from Kathleen Devlin, a former school security chief.

**KATHLEEN DEVLIN:** Sure, make me follow the star of the show. (laughter)

Nope; can't compete with that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Welcome.

MS. DEVLIN: Thank you for having this Committee meeting.

My name is Kathy Devlin; I am a retired Captain from the New Jersey State Police. I was a School Security Chief for almost 10 years. I currently run a part-time consulting business; but that's not why I'm here. I'm here because I am passionate about this.

I'm sure there will be many people here in the audience who talk about funding, and the lack thereof; so I'm not going to touch on that at all.

I just wanted to talk about a couple of best practices.

Because this is such an emotional issue, people sometimes let emotions run their decision-making. And I don't want to see that happen.

I was a member of that School Security Task Force; you'll see my name on that page there. It was very well discussed; we tried to make sure that people were all included. As you referred to, all the communities are different, all the schools are different.

So current best practices, I would say, are-- We talk about access control; and that's fine. Access control -- the hardware and all that stuff -- is very expensive. But that is only good if your staff is trained in doing it properly.

My experience is, you go ring the buzzer, and they buzz the door and open it up. So that's not helpful. All the staff needs to be trained in how they are to handle those situations.

The second thing the Chief of Police of Cherry Hill touched on -- I think this is the most important thing -- is a threat assessment procedure; threat assessment and threat management. It does, in fact, take a village for some of these children who act out in this way. But the laws are such -- HIPAA, juvenile justice employment laws -- that the villagers aren't allowed to talk to each other. So if we can't share information to get an action plan together, then that greatly stymies that effect. And I think that that is really in the direction that we need to go in to be more preventive.

I'm not a big proponent of armed people in the schools. I know I'm going to get daggers shot at me from my former colleagues here. But I think you need to try to be more preventive.

Nothing is 100 percent foolproof, and I know that that's what parents are looking for -- that they want something that's absolutely going to keep their children safe 100 percent of the time; and that just doesn't happen. But schools are safer than their communities are. And I think we need to get the word out to parents about that; get them proper information. This poor young lady is scared about things that maybe she doesn't need to be scared about. So we have to give her information and allay her fears.

And by the way, you were awesome; you really did your homework on that stuff.

So I think that those kinds of things -- threat assessment, making some changes in what we are allowed to do.

When I was at Pemberton School District, we started a threat assessment program. And I'm telling you, as sure as I'm sitting here, we stopped an event from happening because we got out in front of it and we got all of the interventions that we needed. We weren't trying to put him in the criminal justice pipeline; that wasn't the purpose. It was to keep everybody safe.

So that's all I wanted to say -- is that those things, I think, are the way we need to go -- more with the threat assessment, threat management; access control is fine, and training all of the staff. The original Bill only took into consideration teachers; and I think that that -- I think most people are getting away from that. But, absolutely, the food

service workers, the janitors -- everybody, every adult who is in that building needs to know what to do in an emergency and what to look for.

There is a strong correlation between suicide and active shooter events. I know that teachers are required to have some suicide training; and the teachers here -- is it every two years, sir? -- every two years. Maybe that needs to be more often and more encompassing of including active shooters in that, so that these people can get what they need and we can keep our children safe that way.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

MS. DEVLIN: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I have a quick question.

MS. DEVLIN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: You talked about the villages, and not being able to talk to each other. Is there one specific group that you feel, you know, if you're looking past the villages -- you know, that we should be able to talk to each other?

MS. DEVLIN: Usually, the police department-- It's been my experience, anyway, that law enforcement in the schools are pretty good. Because they are allowed to tell you things that may disrupt the organization -- the daily operation of your school. Really, it's more the mental health piece. You talked about the pediatricians. Well, if they get a screening, are the pediatricians going to be able to share their concerns with the school and with the police department to say, "This is a child who we need to have a plan about. We need to have some action taken, and we need to monitor that closely"?

And I don't want you all to just focus on the children. There are staff members, there are parents, there are people outside the community who are also -- could also be potential threats. I mean, you can't just -- you can't put all the bad stuff on the kids, right?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

MS. DEVLIN: So I think it just has to be a little more -- just more information sharing; and I think--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: It's a very valid point.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

You didn't run into any Lampitts in Pemberton, did you? I just want to make sure. (laughter)

MS. DEVLIN: I'm not at liberty to say; I'm sorry. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Just want to make sure.

MS. DEVLIN: There are rules about that; when you change the rules, I'll tell you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: There are a lot of them; there a lot of them, too.

We have Frances Koukotas, from the Diocese of Trenton.

Thank you very much for coming.

**FRANCES KOUKOTAS:** Thank you.

Thank you, everyone, for this opportunity.

My name is Frances Koukotas; I'm the Network Director for the Network of Catholic School Families for the Diocese of Trenton.

And from everything that we're hearing today, I think we are all in agreement that having these types of discussions is just mind-boggling; that we're here talking about children not being safe in their school.

We want to be able to, within our schools, for the Diocese of Trenton and for every school -- we want to make the parents feel confident that we are doing everything that we can possibly do to keep their children safe when they're in our schools.

From what I have heard with the budget, the public schools have received a \$65 million increase in funding for security; but the funding for the nonpublic schools has remained flat, and that is at \$75 per student for this current year. And then, moving forward, it will be that same amount, as it stands right now.

What I have attached to what I have handed out there is a list of the many things that are approved to be used with that money -- with what we receive now. And also attached is a list of what our schools -- it's a sampling of what our schools have used that money for this year, and what they hope to use the money for next year. And it is very basic items, really; it's new locks on doors, new doors, entry systems, security systems, coming in the front door, and window shades.

But there are so many other things that need to be done. A lot of the schools would love to have a guard in the school, but we just -- it just is-- It's just impossible. We do have a situation where we rely on the kindness of strangers -- where the local police will come through the schools at random times, just to do a walk-through, if they are able. That has been worked out with some of our schools.

And the other thing that is not on that list, though, is cybersecurity. That's something that we're going to be looking at down the road, in terms of a definite need for the schools. But it is not something that is currently an approved purchase. We can't get involved with any type of cybersecurity.

So that's really the gist of my comments. We are hoping that the funding for nonpublics increases this year so that the schools can continue to install the security things that they need right now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much, Frances.

Any questions from the members? (no response)

Thank you very much for coming; yes.

MS. KOUKOTAS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have Edward Zebedies, President of the Weymouth Township Board of Education.

**EDWARD ZEBEDIES:** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you.

A little about myself: I'm a fourth-year member of the School Board in Weymouth Township; I'm currently the President. Prior to this, I was a 28-year teacher, and I lost a lot of students in my career -- not to violence, but accidents; and colleagues.

It's hard to counter and come back from those losses.

When I was a teacher, all the students were my kids, whether they were biological or not. As a Board member, all 156 students in my District-- We're a DFGB school, we're a K to 8 District. All 150-some-odd kids are my kids, my job is to ensure that they're safe.

We are under the umbrella of the Buena Barracks. I don't fault Buena; but they're 16 miles away. Between their barracks and our school are four controlled traffic lights, one blinker-controlled intersection. If the Troops travel at 100 miles an hour, response time is 16 minutes, if we're lucky, if we are so unfortunate to have a problem.

As I see it, my job is to ensure that my kids are safe while we're waiting for the cavalry to come, plain and simple.

Unfortunately, Atlantic County, as many of you know, we lead the nation in foreclosures.

(cell phone plays *Reveille*) Excuse me; my medication alert.  
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We'll remind you afterwards to take it.

MR. ZEBEDIES: I'm sorry about that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: That's quite all right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: You did that on purpose.

MR. ZEBEDIES: No, I did not. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: The cavalry; I like that.  
That's really good.

MR. ZEBEDIES: Okay.

My District, as I started to say-- Atlantic County is leading the nation in foreclosures; we have a very high unemployment rate. We're losing students because of loss of jobs; families moving and consolidating.

I believe that there are five steps that your Committee can help with to help alleviate the threat. Some involve a great deal of money; some don't.

A lot of schools in our area don't have airlock vestibules. I would like to see the State, if not mandate, at least subsidize or make funds available for the construction of a secure airlock, where people who want to enter the school during the day can be secured and properly vetted before they come into the building.

Second, I believe the State has to look at the construction standards for the schools. Just because a deranged individual may not be able to get into the school, they are not no longer a threat to the students inside the school. From what I have seen in the military, from when I was in, a lot of the ammunition could go through the walls like a hot knife through butter, making the individuals secure in the school very unsecure.

On the heels for schools that can't be enhanced that way, look at making funding available, or some type of long-term loan, so schools can put in storm shelters, like the shelter-in-place that was highlighted right after the Parkland disaster down in Florida. Basically, a storm shelter that's bullet proof, that kids can get into. You can put a 32-student class in one of these devices for 34 seconds; they show where it's been tested with ammunition and explosive charges -- no entry. Our kids can be safe. This is where it has to draw on the partnership for education.

When I was teaching, one of my colleagues was brutally assaulted by students. As a result of her efforts, Congressman Hughes' office was instrumental in helping getting legislation passed that allowed discipline records to follow students when they transferred schools.

Along that line, when a person applies for a firearms permit -- if they're young, they have very little contact with the State or with the local police to establish a history to show that there should be some red flags. I

would suggest that the Legislature investigate sponsoring a bill where they forward the discipline records of all students to the county adjuster -- who is responsible for informing the next system of disciplined students -- and let that expire at their age of 21. Give the kids a chance, then, to establish their own footprint with law enforcement that says, "Hey, this person shouldn't be in here."

We have pet registries for pet abusers; we have sexual registries for sexual abusers. I'm not saying we go out and advertise; we shouldn't hire banner planes. But I believe that a similar registry should be established for people who are actively taking psychotropic medications, to report to the county adjusters to flag them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Edward, if you could just finish up, I'd appreciate it.

MR. ZEBEDIES: Yes, ma'am.

A week-and-a-half ago, the Secret Service released a study -- or at least it became known to the public -- of all the criteria that they identified. The three that we can do something with, through legislation-- Over half of the people who were involved in the 28 mass attacks last year, that led to 147 losses of life and 700 wounded, 71 percent had criminal charges. Young applicants for a firearms ID cards -- they don't have the time to really get their record out, and resort to the school records.

(cell phone rings)

Mental health symptoms -- 66 percent had mental health issues, mostly psychoses and such, that would disqualify them; or they had -- 54 percent had a history of abuse or use of illegal substances.

We can address this without being an avalanche. Please, look at our options.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Edward; thank you very much.

MR. ZEBEDIES: And I apologize for the interruptions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: That's okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Take your medicine.  
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Are there any questions for Edward? (no response)

Seeing none, thank you very much, Edward.

MR. ZEBEDIES: Thank you, ma'am.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We appreciate your passion.

Chief of Police Harry Earle, from Gloucester Township.

Thank you very much for coming, Chief.

**CHIEF W. HENRY EARLE:** Thank you; good afternoon.

Good afternoon, everyone.

I appreciate this opportunity; what a great experience on such an important topic.

I come to you as the Chief of Gloucester Township Police, Camden County; and I say that because commonly, sometimes, you think it is *Gloucester* County, but it is *Camden* County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We know.

CHIEF EARLE: And I speak to you as the Chief of Police of the Gloucester Township Police Department, as a parent of three school-age

children, and also I sit with a number of organizations that really try to better the juvenile justice system and the criminal justice system overall.

And in Gloucester Township, we have about 9,000 students every day; and seven fulltime police officers in our schools.

I think what's happened lately is -- one of the areas that concerns me is, people don't necessarily ask, "Why?" And we look at the most recent situation at Stoneman Douglas, when we see-- The question should be, "How does a 10-year-old boy, 8 years later, kill 17 people?"

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Chief, can you just pull the middle microphone closer to you?

CHIEF EARLE: This one?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Yes; thank you.

CHIEF EARLE: I think what the question should be is, "How can we say that a 10-year-old boy, 8 years later, killed 17 people in a high school? And what did we miss, as a community?"

And since 2011, in Gloucester Township, we have had, really, what -- we've had a violence prevention program that we feel has addressed that issue, particularly around-- Which began as, really, a violence reduction program in our schools in 2011.

So those seven full-time officers that I mentioned work very closely, obviously, every day with the school Administrators. But on top of that, our police officers working in the streets every day -- they're encountering youth. They see the conditions and they see those first-time indicators. And we know there is not necessarily a profile of the active shooter; but there are indicators. And if we ask the right questions and say,

“How did that 10-year-old become an active shooter at 18?” you would start to see those indicators a little bit more.

So our program at Gloucester Township looks to identify, particularly, youth who have had some of these indicators; whether it be identifying those adverse childhood experiences, a parent who has been arrested, juveniles who had a first- or second-time offense with the criminal justice system, children who have run away, children who have had a mental health issue or a crisis event, children who are exposed to trauma. And one trauma that we are identifying now, that is very prevalent, is children who are seeing a loved one in the home who has overdosed.

Those are the kinds of issues that are affecting youth, and tracing back over a period of time have an impact on their entire life, not just, certainly, their life in high school.

So with that information that we collect in the Department, all of that is funneled to a weekly meeting, that we began in 2011, called the *Juvenile Unit Huddle*. You know, at the time I would have said we would have named that a *threat assessment meeting*; but, you know, at the time, in 2011, that wasn't the talk anymore; but it is today, and that's what it is.

So at that meeting is everyone who touches youth in the Department, including a social worker. And we create an action plan for that child that involves the school itself. And some of those outcomes for that child would be connecting that child to services, whether it be inside of the school; or through the New Jersey Children's System of Care; our own juvenile diversion programs, where we're not only teaching the child about the consequences of their behavior, but helping the parents learn parenting

skills through our own programs, whether in the schools or through our Police Department.

And then some of the most simple processes that we do is informing the school about some of those issues -- which we've heard some of the other testimony today -- there are opportunities to do that. We don't always see that exercised by the local police departments that I see.

And then informing that school about the child's trusted adult. So we actually collect that information from children. About 59 percent of the children we deal with, who have run away from home, identify a trusted adult in their school. And we inform that trusted adult to ask -- you need to ask how this child is doing. We can't measure that outcome; but we do, and we've seen some great success in terms of them changing their behavior.

When we look at what occurred at Stoneman Douglas High School-- And I can't-- Obviously, it's too soon to say what occurred there. But I know that in Gloucester Township, one incident involving a child -- one report of a child being truant from school; one report of a child being arrested for an offense, either in or out of school, one incident of that; going to a crisis center results in a discussion at our Huddle, resulting in an action plan. A child who had multiple contacts with the Gloucester Township Police Department would have multiple services offered through many organizations that exist already in New Jersey. But they have to be connected.

One of the concerns that I have is the rush to place officers in school. And that may sound like hypocrisy when I say that we have seven full-time officers in school; and we need those officers in schools. But at the same time, officers in the school, alone, are not going to stop this problem.

Yes, it may prevent or stop a death in a school; and that's, of course, important. But they will resort to school bus stops, or school buses or places that have no school security. We need to identify the active shooter early on. And that partnership can exist if it's done between the partnerships --between law enforcement at schools -- when you exercise what we really already have, the laws exist that we can do so.

Another concern that I have is the pressure from parents to put the officers in schools at the cost of other things that we need. And also this, I guess, belief that, "Well, we put an officer in the school, and everything is okay." And it's not, right? It's not going to be okay. It's important; again, we're speaking about seven-- But it needs a comprehensive plan to identify those children who are at risk.

And costs are an issue; we've heard some today. But what I see in some districts -- and not in Gloucester Township, because I said I would speak on a couple of different points of view there.

But, you know, lockdown audible systems are expensive; building changes are expensive. But then we put an officer in the school, and we say, "It's okay, parents; we put an officer in the school," and we make no other of these changes. And that is a very dangerous slope; I'm afraid that could happen.

One of my final points is that funding, again -- is that we divert too much money just to put an officer in the school, or other security measures. And we reduce what may really prevent some of these active shooters -- and that's professional support staff in the school; the time for Administrators to spend time with children in the school, because they are just as important in stopping the active shooter -- is that relationship. It is

a combination; but right now I hear a lot of, “Just put an officer in the school.” And that may sound odd, coming from a Chief of Police.

The information I described about the Juvenile Unit Huddle is in the one booklet that I gave you. It’s described in detail -- some of the outcomes and the entire process. And then, more or less, the statement that I gave you is in the other document that I gave you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Chief.

A quick question: You talked about the collaboration that you have. Are there roadblocks; are there roadblocks that we can help you with, in terms of that type of collaboration that maybe could enhance the overall outcome?

CHIEF EARLE: The one roadblock that we’re trying to overcome is that when we encounter children who are under DCP&P -- the Division of Child Protection and Permanency in New Jersey -- so-- And we’ve been trying to work through this. So we have a great relationship with the schools in sharing information. There is one aspect I think -- some of the mental health crisis information that we do get is a little tougher to get to the school with confidentiality. Generally, we try to overcome that with consent -- is how we get around that -- with one of the parents.

But in terms of the DCP&P notification, we find we’re working with the same children at the same time, but neither one of us share that information. And we’ve spoken to some higher-level DCP&P folks trying to do, more or less, say, a pilot project in Gloucester Township. Because we’ll get these children, and they’re having services through DCP&P; and the school might not even be aware of that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Any questions?

Assemblyman Houghtaling.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Just so you know -- my grandchildren go to Gloucester; they just moved down there.

But my question for you is, how do you -- who covers the cost of the police officers in the school?

CHIEF EARLE: In our school -- two different districts have-- The school does.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: The school reimburses the town?

CHIEF EARLE: That's correct; yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Okay; thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Any further questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: I just want to thank you, because I think this program is very much like when we want to prevent kids from taking opioids; and people who overdose should have guidance. So this is just-- I never even thought that this was a good way to do it -- when you have a Huddle. We have Huddles for all kinds of things, right? -- in schools.

So thank you, sir, for bringing this to our attention. It's really something that should be considered as a best practice, going forward.

CHIEF EARLE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Chief, very much for coming. We appreciate it.

CHIEF EARLE: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have David Rossi, from no organization.

DAVID ROSSI: I'd like to switch spots. He has a time restraint -- Chris Benedetto. Is that okay?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Sure.

MR. ROSSI: He can take my-- Whenever his name is called, I'll go.

CHRISTOPHER BENEDETTO: Thank you, David.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Good afternoon, Chris; how are you?

MR. BENEDETTO: Hello; how are you, Chairwoman?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I'm good, I'm good.

MR. BENEDETTO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We're talking about school safety and school security.

MR. BENEDETTO: Yes.

So first of all, thank you to all the people who have come today to talk about security, especially our Board of Ed, and our police, and our District, and the people who are sharing stories.

My name is Chris Benedetto; I live in Cherry Hill. I'm the Co-Chair of the Fair Funding group.

I'm not a security expert, but I am a very good business analyst and a good investigator. And I think the root causes here of some of our security issues and concerns in Cherry Hill come down to governance and budget adequacy.

So I did a little bit of research, and I want to share that knowledge and compare and contrast that with you.

So in the material that I'm going to give to you are all the numbers for not only uncapped adjustment aid, but also for the categorical security aid. And I spent all day Saturday and all day Sunday reading Hopatcong, and Jersey City, and Washington Township, and Voorhees' budgets. And I just want to kind of compare and contrast, because unfortunately, Cherry Hill's security position, I think, is very much a function of our budget position when it comes to uncapped adjustment aid and also categorical security aid.

So just as a comparison: Jersey City -- overfunded \$176 million a year in uncapped adjustment aid, and they get \$12 million a year in categorical security aid. They have 190 security guards. I went through every single budget line item to review every single paid employee at Jersey City.

So please explain to me how is it that Jersey City has three times as many students, but 450 times as much budget than a city like Cherry Hill? So if you can't answer-- And this is also in a city that's fetching home valuations of \$800,000, and whose local fair share is 29 percent. So they're paying less; but they're getting millions and millions of dollars of categorical security aid, and millions and millions of annual dollars in uncapped aid. So that's where 190 police officers, or 10-month security officers go.

So, okay, okay, okay; okay. Jersey City -- unfair comparison; I get it. You're all going to crucify me for that. (laughter)

But the fact is, that the State of New Jersey also gives more security aid to districts that are wealthier than Cherry Hill. The State of New Jersey assesses Princeton -- a more dangerous place, compared to Cherry Hill -- you're giving them \$100 per student; we get \$24 per student. We don't make the threshold of \$75.

Princeton -- dangerous, dangerous place -- \$100 per student; Montclair -- another really dangerous place in this state -- they get \$113.

Let's turn to Washington Township. So I cut out Hopatcong and I cut out Voorhees. But let me keep Washington Township on the dime here. A close neighbor of ours; they receive three times as much security aid and they are also overfunded annually to the tune of almost \$10 million

When Stoneman Douglas happened, I went on their website and I downloaded a document from their school Administrator to their parents and students. It's a public document. What do they have in their schools, with \$10 million extra dollars a year and three times as much security aid as Cherry Hill? They have surveillance cameras; they have active armed police officers; they have security vestibules; they have the ability for their police to observe the live feeds, and they're in the process of changing all their classroom door locks to the vestibule automatic door locking system.

So what's my point? Well, I learned that adjustment and security aid, again, does not follow the child or the formula. I also learned that Cherry Hill is not fairly aided, when it comes to comparative districts that are notably wealthier and also those that are not as wealthy. And I learned that the State's formula for security aid, here in Cherry Hill -- that

supposedly guarantees every student \$75 -- is not going to happen here in Cherry Hill. And we're not alone; there are 193 other districts in the same situation.

So my point today -- I'll wrap up with this -- is Cherry Hill needs adjustment and security aid from the State to secure our schools. We seem to have been intentionally held back for the last 10 years, and we need State financing to improve our schools.

In this climate, you are not accomplishing your mission and vision -- and whatever it is that is your mission and vision. I demand that you work to give us our uncapped full funding aid of \$29 million and a significant increase in our categorical security aid. How can you abandon the State's basic responsibility here, and look at Cherry Hill and these people and say that you're doing the right thing when these other districts are getting so much more money than us?

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Chris, thank you for your commitment, and your time, and actually your ability to, as you said -- a business analyst -- to be able to provide this kind of information to us.

MR. BENEDETTO: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We've worked together many times, in reference to Fair Funding for Cherry Hill. And your work is really appreciated and necessary.

MR. BENEDETTO: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblywoman Egan Jones -- you had a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: Yes; thank you.

Not a question, so much, as I want to speak to the issue you brought up. And I think it was mentioned by everyone before you -- about the inequities in the school funding formula.

I spent the last two years on the Education Committee, where we traveled around the state--

MR. BENEDETTO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: --to listen to how many communities were underfunded. I can tell you that, last year, when we did the budget, the Legislature worked really hard. We had a stalemate for a while; but we all came together, and we began to address the inequities.

I have been to two public hearings of this year's budget as a member, now, of the Budget Committee. One was just this afternoon, and the young lady who was here from Chesterfield certainly participated in that discussion. It hasn't been corrected; we're not following the course that was laid out last year. The Budget Committee has made a commitment to restore funding, as best we can, to all districts. Cherry Hill is no different than Bayonne, which sits next to Jersey City. Jersey City has been overfunded by \$120 million; Bayonne underfunded by \$50 million. There is no equity in that. We did a disservice to every district by not properly funding the School Funding Reform Act. We're trying to rectify what hasn't been done for seven years.

We are taking it step by step; and as we address this year's funding in the budget, I think you will see, again, we'll move people forward. But it will not happen in one stroke of the pen.

MR. BENEDETTO: We understand.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: But the issue is clearly being addressed.

MR. BENEDETTO: But I just want to be clear. Our number is \$29 million; and we have been 10 years without it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: I understand you.

MR. BENEDETTO: Okay? And so--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: It's not unlike--

MR. BENEDETTO: --enrollment caps, and adjustment aid, and categorical security aid--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: Totally wrong; yes, totally wrong.

MR. BENEDETTO: --are all screwed up, okay?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: We have districts with 1,600 more students--

MR. BENEDETTO: And in 2008 -- we had no parachute in 2008. All of our money was taken.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: I understand. You are part of a large group of schools.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you.

Again, the Senate Budget Committee has also been hearing discussion on this.

I know that your Assemblyman here -- the Assembly Majority Leader is as committed to changing the allocation of the funds as they are. I know Steve Sweeney is committed to changing them, I'm committed; the

Governor has even said he agrees that what's out there is not fair, and seems to be amenable to change.

So what you have seen come out of the Governor's Office I don't think is going to be nearly what's going to be in the final budget.

MR. BENEDETTO: Thank you, again.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Chris.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Chairwoman?

MR. BENEDETTO: I think there's a question, or a comment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I'd just like to comment -- after the most recent shooting, I was contacted by a Chief of Police and a School Business Administrator, in a district that I do not represent, and they asked me what could they do. I really didn't know what they could do. And I found out, okay, there's a \$75-- I was told there's \$75 -- every district -- this is what I was told -- \$75 for every district (*sic*). If you want to get alarms, you want to get screeners, you want to hire policemen -- that's your pot of money.

So what you're really saying is, it's not true. It is not true.

MR. BENEDETTO: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Some get bazillions beyond what they really need--

MR. BENEDETTO: That's absolutely correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: --and in the same districts, they continue to get money and take from other districts. And yet we sit here, year after year after year, and hear about inequities in funding.

And now we're talking about school safety; but it's the whole gamut of things. And I've been in the Legislature a long time; and I'm sure a lot of my colleagues have. And it's just so unfair the way that some districts -- continually, the same districts -- are the ones who really are taking all the cash that should be available.

So I really think that to say that it's up to the discretion of the district to decide how they want to distribute that money when, in reality, the money is not there -- it's not there.

MR. BENEDETTO: Yes. It's about in-flow.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: No--

MR. BENEDETTO: We have no in-flow.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: I understand it really well, because I've heard from almost every district in this state in the past year-and-a-half.

SENATOR RUIZ: All right; thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you; thank you, Chris, very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JONES: --and it hasn't changed in this budget.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: John Wachter, Duo (*sic*) Security.

MR. BENEDETTO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thanks, Chris.

MR. BENEDETTO: I'm going to leave our Fair Funding flyers here. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Is John Wachter here, from Duo Security?

**J O H N W A C H T E R:** (off mike) I'm here, but I wasn't scheduled to speak.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: All right.

MR. WACHTER: If that's okay; if you would like me to talk--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: No, that's-- We appreciate you being here. (laughter)

SENATOR RUIZ: You're good.

MR. WACHTER: Okay. I figured you've had a lot of conversation going, and--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We do, we do, we do.

And at this point, you know -- at this point, when we've heard this much testimony, we're going to call up people. But if you have something to add, we ask you to add to the conversation, not repeat the conversation, and not repeat what we've already heard.

We have Chief Macauley, from Camden County Sheriff's Department.

And Chief, just pull that middle microphone closer to you so everybody can hear.

Thank you.

**C H I E F T H O M A S M A C A U L E Y:** Good afternoon, Committee.

I appreciate this opportunity to address you this afternoon.

I was listening to my colleagues speak before me -- Chief Earle; retired Captain Devlin, who I am friendly with; and Chief Monaghan.

And in the police world, they mentioned *threat assessment* and *prevention*. And certainly, I agree with them 110 percent -- that they're right on the ball with that type of action.

I guess what I came here to tell you is what our organization does, what role it plays. And from hearing from my colleagues, I believe what we do is prepare for failure. Chief Monaghan, in particular, said, if you have one these incidents it's, basically, you failed. And what we do is prepare for failure.

Prior to being a Chief at the Sherriff's Office I was a Major with the State Police. And I didn't realize what this organization did, but I came to learn pretty quickly what they do. They provide technical support -- a lot of technical support throughout the County. And some of the things they do is they have bomb technicians; they provide or respond to over 100 suspicious package calls throughout the County each year. It goes anywhere from 50 to 100. They have canine bomb and narcotics dogs that respond to over 200 complaints throughout the year, throughout the County. And they have a SWAT -- what we call a *SERT team* -- it is the *Sherriff's Emergency Response Team* -- that responds to over 300 calls, 300 incidents throughout the County.

And when I talk about *incidents*, I'm talking about warrants that are served, barricaded subjects, and undercover protection details that come about throughout the County.

They also have a Special Investigation Unit that arrests, on an annual basis, over 2,000 people. And we're talking about, like, serious County offenders who have no business being on the street in Camden County.

I have to tell you -- I mean, I'm very impressed with this agency -- what they do -- and I'm happy to be a part of it.

But getting back to what they do here, what role they play -- I think they play the *preparation for failure role*. And in doing that, it's a two-pronged partnership with local agencies throughout the County and with the school administrations.

What we do for police officers is, we basically-- When you have an incident like this, it's not a SWAT event, it's not a SERT -- I call it *SERT* -- it's not a SWAT event. These patrol officers respond, and they're expected to enter. Unlike, maybe, what you've heard in Florida, our officers, throughout the County -- and these officers can support what I'm about to say -- they respond and go into the school, go into the line of fire.

These incidents last about 8 to 12 minutes. So you can only imagine, you only have a short period of time to respond; and you better get in the school to show some sign of force. And their idea is that they go -- they immediately respond to the shooter.

In addition to that, several police agencies -- and I couldn't tell you how many -- but several have equipped their officers with long rifles. In my day, when I went out on patrol we had shotguns. They no longer equip themselves with shotguns; they equip themselves with long rifles. And what this does is it improves accuracy for when they do engage in an event like this; and it also allows the rounds -- the rifle rounds to penetrate armor-piercing vests that an assailant could be wearing. So there's a particular need for these long rifles.

The other portion of that training we provide to civilians; in this case, it would be teachers or Administration. What we do -- and I

know Chief Monaghan talked about prevention -- what we do is talk about prevention, and we talk about the stages that these individuals go through when preparing an event of this type, and what to look for -- what indicators to look for.

A lot of these individuals are outspoken about what they're about to do. And again -- and you hear this time and time again -- you're supposed to report what it is you see. And we make these teachers aware of that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Chief, if you can just wrap it up.

CHIEF MACAULEY: Okay.

Civilians are also told to run, hide, and fight -- which I'm sure a lot of people have heard. They're also told to have a plan, a plan of action. I can't come in a school and tell people where to hide; but they know where to hide, and they should plan that beforehand.

And lastly, civilians are told how police officers will respond; you know, how they should react in the event of an incident.

That's all I have.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

Any questions from the Committee? (no response)

Thank you very much for your testimony, Chief; we appreciate it.

CHIEF MACAULEY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have Dan Steinmetz, a concerned grandfather.

Dan.

**DANIEL STEINMETZ:** Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

MR. STEINMETZ: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Good afternoon.

MR. STEINMETZ: My name is Dan Steinmetz; I live in Gloucester Township.

I'm here solely as a grandfather of six grandchildren attending nonpublic schools; specifically Our Lady of Hope in Gloucester Township and Christ the King in Haddonfield.

I was very upset to learn that while the Governor's budget that he submitted to you calls for a \$65 million increase in aid for security for public schools, he chose not to have any increase at all for nonpublic schools, which is real slap in the face at these schools that are trying to protect their children.

When it comes school security, the life of a public school student is just as valuable as the life of nonpublic school student, and vice versa. Given the situation, my request -- and I'll probably be the shortest speaker you have today -- is that you see to it, by whatever means you can, that whatever increase is in the budget for Fiscal Year 2019 for security for public school students, whatever that is, that there be a proportionate increase for security of nonpublic school students. Their lives are just as valuable as any other children.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

Any questions from the Committee? (no response)

Thank you very much.

We have Pat Branningan, from the New Jersey Catholic Conference.

I think Pat might have left.

We have Robert Lipinski.

**ROBERT LIPINSKI:** I'm here, but not to speak.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: All right; thank you very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have Brian Kovacs, founder of Strategic Ops Group.

**BRIAN C. KOVACS:** First off, I'd like to say thank you, Senator Ruiz and Assemblywoman Lampitt; we appreciate the opportunity to be here.

As a Jersey kid, born and raised, this is pretty outstanding for me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Well, we thank you for coming.

MR. KOVACS: Thank you.

So we own a company called Strategic Ops Group. We are based out in Arizona; however, we are starting training here in New Jersey.

We focus on military and law enforcement usually; but we've been asked to come in and consult on a few different issues with schools. And that's been a technique that's been kind of difficult -- trying to figure

out the best way to handle it is cumbersome at times. But the team that we have specializes in, basically, special operations techniques. And what those are is unconventional warfare, which is what you're looking at.

This gives us knowledge to think outside the box, and choosing a best solution; providing threat assessments and training to school personnel, specifically; thinking outside of law enforcement response and armed personnel.

Preventative strategies such as anti-bullying programs and support networks are paramount to school safety. These programs are valuable and, coupled with other measures, to create resources for prevention of these incidents.

We're here to provide thorough threat assessments for each and every school or educational venue to mitigate and minimize these tragic events from ever happening. Something different that my company does, as opposed to others out there, is we can even work remotely with districts or schools that are underfunded. This isn't a, "We'll be onsite doing every single school ourselves." This is teaching the school administrators, the school personnel, even the custodians different awareness levels. So regardless of economic background, political choices, religious beliefs, ethnicities -- we can all agree that our children's safety should be placed above all else. And right now, nearly 19 years after the Columbine massacre, our schools are still a very vulnerable target.

Our goal is to make these senseless tragedies a thing of the past. Our experiences allow us to identify vulnerabilities, assess possible threats, and develop comprehensive action plans that will save lives.

**JESSTON WILSON:** We were taught, and we teach our children, that knowledge is your most important asset. Our schools are filled with highly intelligent people -- the teachers, the custodians, and administrative staff. Our program utilizes these people and gives them the tools that they need to survive and protect lives during these most heinous of situations.

We have made our program highly adaptable to fit nearly any location, staff structure, or budget. We will enhance the awareness of the current school staff, turning them into a self-assessing security council that can and will evolve with the ever-changing threat climate; and it will change.

Most important of all, this can be done long before there's any discussion about arming the school staff. These programs will require minimal additional physical or financial resources. For schools that have adopted some form of School Resource Officer program, we can provide enhanced knowledge and training to help them achieve new proficiencies as well.

The economic and practical aspects of our program would allow it to be implemented across all 2,500-plus schools in New Jersey in a timely manner. In addition, we can also help to develop a statewide standardization for school staff to easily communicate with local police and first responders, identifying the threat and de-escalating the situation as quickly as possible. Effective communication is absolutely key during a crisis; and I know communication has been a problem that's been discussed in here.

The minimalist approach of our program is no coincidence. We have tailored it specifically to have the least amount of mental impact on the students by remaining as unobtrusive as possible to the school day.

As these new methods are implemented, there will be minimal negative effect on the student psyche. Much of the effectiveness of this program relies on how subtle it really is.

The convenience of this program is that it can be even instituted on a weekend or during the summer vacation.

Everyone on our team has spent their lives perfecting their craft in defense of this great country and her people.

On behalf of our team, I'd like to thank everybody for hearing us out today, and allowing us to shed light on some of the options that we offer as Strategic Ops Group.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

And just for the record, could you just state your name?

MR. WILSON: Jesston Wilson.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Jesston.

You're based out of Arizona?

MR. KOVACS: We are; but we've been training a lot in New Jersey. We were training with a school last week here; we decided to stay to give some insight into what we've learned. And in working with one particular school -- we're working with another one tomorrow -- we've learned a lot about how they expect the police to respond, or what's expected of police when crises happen.

Working from the other side of it, where we're usually training the officers in how to respond to it, it's kind of a different thing that we've

had to mold entirely from scratch. Luckily, one of our main guys is a former Navy SEAL and FBI agent, specializing in counterterrorism. And he is pretty much an expert on threat assessment and awareness. We're not selling a product to you guys; we're selling awareness to the school overall. So there's an umbrella of safety given to everybody; not just students, but also the Administrators, because they can be victims too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

Any questions from the Committee? (no response)

It's great to know that there's a resource out there, especially for the underfunded schools.

Thank you very much; we really appreciate it.

MR. WILSON: Yes, ma'am.

MR. KOVACS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have Rick Short, an activist from Cherry Hill.

**RICK SHORT:** Always a pleasure, Assemblywoman Lampitt; always a pleasure.

I'm actually going to have two speakers today. I'm working with Lori Alhadeff out of Florida; her daughter was killed in the Parkland shooting. We're going to bring her in live through the amazing technology of FaceTime. She's going to talk for just a few minutes -- a minute or two.

I must say it's quite honorable -- this woman, because you're working on that new Alyssa Law right now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Right; exactly. I'm glad you brought that up. It's going to be voted on Thursday.

MR. SHORT: So it's quite amazing -- she is quite amazing; 54 days ago she lost her daughter; and she's already started a 501(c)(3), and I'm already working with her.

She's expecting-- Here we go; technology at work.

Hi, Lori. Do you see me?

**(Ms. Alhadeff's testimony was through FaceTime and, therefore, not of the best quality)**

L O R I A L H A D E F F: (on phone) Hi.

MR. SHORT: Hi.

MS. ALHADEFF: Yes.

MR. SHORT: Hi; welcome to Cherry Hill, New Jersey. We're here with the Assembly and the Senators.

You have the floor; everyone is listening intently.

Thank you.

MS. ALHADEFF: To the New Jersey Assembly and New Jersey Senate school security hearing, my name is Lori Alhadeff.

After graduating college, I was a health and physical education teacher, with my Master's in Education, and a coach for five years. Then I had my daughter, Alyssa Alhadeff, and was a stay-at-home mom for the last 14 years.

After February 14, I've become a safety activist.

I lived in New Jersey my whole life, and I moved to Parkland, Florida, three-and-a-half years ago because it was called *the safest city*.

“They are all unsafe; they had no time. They sat there waiting to get picked off, one at a time.

“Why? Why, I cried. It was not my time. I sat there, shot with one in my heart. I tried, Mom; I tried to run, like you said. But he came back with a gun and he shot me 10 times on his run.

“It did not hurt; I was instantly dead. But I’m so sorry that I left this world to the end. I had so much time, I thought. I had so much fun. I had so much to overcome. Why, Mom? Why did this gun take my life from me in just one quick run? I wanted to be someone so great. All I wanted to do was to create. Why can’t our adults protect us and make our schools safe?”

On Valentine’s Day, my daughter, Alyssa Alhadeff, was brutally shot down in her English class as she tried to learn. On this day, I lost my daughter; but the world lost one of the great ones.

We will build fire on ice, and we will get to the end of this endless tunnel of fight. You need to make changes now.

In my grief, I have started a nonprofit organization called *Make Schools Safe*, which will focus on improving the safety of schools by researching and teaching best practices for school safety, and implementing those practices in model schools that can serve as examples everywhere.

Please visit my website, [makeourschoolssafe.org](http://makeourschoolssafe.org) and donate to find preventative measures, preventative strategies by creating a Dream Team Club in your school now. You can see the website for requirements.

We must demand that our schools are safe now. We must act now, locally, to make sure our Administrators and law makers share our priorities and are thinking in creative ways. We have to change our

thinking and raise school safety, now, as important as the curriculum, the programs, and the test scores. Because if one child dies on the schools' watch, nothing else matters. The school has failed every single student. We can't rely anymore on the odds of nothing happening in our schools, and that it will happen to someone else. The odds were that Alyssa would not be killed in her high school. Alyssa used to say, "We don't need to lock our doors, Mom, because nothing ever happens in Parkland."

Let's take action today and make our schools safe. It won't be easy; but nothing ever is. With passionate persistence, it can be done. Support Make Schools Safe.

In New Jersey, Alyssa's Law, a Bill now pending in Jersey, will require schools to have the ability to trigger silent alarms to local law enforcement. There needs to be uniform Code Red lockdown drills, implemented by every New Jersey school consistently, that are created by safety experts who also train teachers with techniques and protocols to increase victims' survival rates.

Also, Principals can do timed Code Red drills, and time the class as part of the teachers' evaluation. Not only cognitively do the teachers and students need to know what to do, they also physically do too. Muscle memory -- they need to know how to react, just like a soccer player does when shooting a ball to the goal.

For \$5, a red duct tape can create a safe zone in each classroom, so when the shooter looks into the room, he does not see anyone. Also, this empowers each child to know where to go.

Alyssa was shot the first time. If she knew where to go, she could have survived as she moved to an area out of the shooter's zone.

Safety suggestions: First, school security and safety assessment experts need to come into the schools and assess the schools to come up with a game plan for the school to implement. The average duration of a school shooting is 12 minutes; from the Department of Homeland Security's website. Both the FBI and Homeland Security say it takes 18 minutes to get to the school. Therefore, the shooting is over and law enforcement can't even get there in time. You have to keep these children safe, allowing time for law enforcement to get there.

Alyssa's Law is a great example of how to reduce time. Teachers can use an app or clock to activate the police response to get to the shooter. Establish a police command center which has a 2018 security camera system in all schools to be the eyes for the police, and to connect what is going on in the school with the command center.

The center's sole responsibility is to address school safety matters in the district. If Stoneman Douglas High School, that has over 3,000 students, had that there, there wouldn't have been a disconnect between the two police agencies and the 20-minute delay of video, confusing the situation further.

Alyssa and the 16 other victims, might have survived. Every second makes a difference. Harden the schools; provide protective layers to keep our kids safe while waiting for law enforcement to get there. The first layer: prevent them from getting into the grounds; create fencing around the property to reduce access points.

Annual ID badges with RFID technology allows getting scanning capabilities to get into doors.

Put life-saving first aid kits and tourniquets in each classroom, and train your teachers. Bulletproof glass in all windows and bulletproof doors with bulletproof glass on the door. If we had that, Alyssa would not have been shot 10 times.

Also, lock all the doors to the school. By the security office, put an empty box outside the doors where parents can drop off lunches, gym clothes, and homework. At 10:00 a.m., pick up the box and give it out to the students accordingly. This prevents parents from coming into the school.

Lastly, eliminate anybody coming to school during period changes, like the FedEx guy or Uber needs, thus protecting the kids from somebody who wants to do harm.

I encourage parents to buy their children bulletproof backpacks that protect against AR-15 bullets. Teach them how to turn them around so that the bag is in the front of their body, protecting their vital organs.

Know all your child's passwords in their phones; look at their social media. If you see something, say something. Limit your children from playing *Fortnite* and other vile video games, because kids are becoming desensitized.

I want to thank the legislators for being here today and for listening to me; for the (indiscernible) currently happening and ever moving forward today with an open mind to create school change now. Don't wait to spend your money that you have in your reserves, like Parkland did. Trust me; they, too, never thought this would have happened to them either.

Thank you.

MR. SHORT: Do you have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, Lori, very much.

And, you know, I'm tearing up. Our severe condolences to you, and your family, and to the families in Parkland.

I hope you realize that New Jersey is listening, that we're here, and that we're taking it very seriously for our children here in New Jersey. That's why we're out here in the community doing the real work, the public work, to hear from the people who are in our schools and in our communities -- what more we should be doing here in New Jersey.

Senator.

SENATOR RUIZ: I just want to thank you for your courage.

It is difficult to listen to -- in a sense that we're talking about empowering our students with a book pack that can potentially save their lives.

We have to do better.

MS. ALHADEFF: Thank you.

MR. SHORT: Anyone else -- questions, or--?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Anybody else want to say something? No?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: I just -- I have a comment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblywoman Timberlake.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: I just want to thank you so much for your courage, and for your strength, and for your scope of

wanting to ensure that this doesn't happen to any other child -- not just in your immediate community, but throughout the nation.

Thank you.

MS. ALHADEFF: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We'll be voting on the piece of legislation on Thursday. And I know it doesn't bring back Alyssa, but her name and her memory will be carried on here in New Jersey, where you came from, forever.

MS. ALHADEFF: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Anybody else? (no response)

MR. SHORT: Thank you, Lori; thank you very much.

MS. ALHADEFF: Okay; thank you.

MR. SHORT: I'll be in touch, I'll be in touch.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Rick, thank you very much for arranging that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

MR. SHORT: Sure.

My name is Rick Short; I am a local activist, a researcher. I know-- Some of you I know, some of you don't. I was part of the red light camera anti-campaign, where I brought out facts. I also am against the speed cameras, which are trying to come in. Just look at the Baltimore city numbers. The deaths are not reducing; it's just a fallacy.

So what I want to talk about is not so much Cherry Hill, but I want to talk about the problems, after analyzing it. And you know what's unique about me -- because I'm just not in Cherry Hill; I'm not in Camden County. I go out to Pennsylvania, I research; I got to Wichita, Kansas, I research; I go to Colorado, I research. I research everywhere, so I know what everyone else is doing.

And, you know, it takes pretty bold steps to -- and I'm going to make a bold step here -- I am going to tell you that the protocols for the State of New Jersey are horrible, okay? And I'm going to explain to you why they're horrible; and I'm going to go after the New Jersey State Police, and I'm going to question the New Jersey State Police, and I'm going to question the Camden County protocols.

Now, why I say this is because -- think about this, guys. After 9/11 happened, you never hear of any airline being attacked or a cockpit being taken over. But unless we get good protocols in this state for lockdowns, you will -- that's what we're here today to do, is to harden our schools.

So what am I talking about? When a lockdown occurs, you have certain counties in certain towns doing different things. You have some say -- let's say, Voorhees -- where they don't use shades and they have no card system. I studied the Parkland shooting, and that's how I got to meet Lori. The problem was -- is, they didn't have a card system in Parkland. Now, some districts in the County have them, and some don't. The State Police say, "Use them," and I'm all for it. It's great. But, guess what? Everyone else is not using the card system.

When you have an officer enter a building, trying to clear rooms in Parkland, and you have them arguing with a teacher behind the door and then the reporters come in later, and say, "Oh, the teacher was a hero because he didn't let the police--" You're wasting time, okay? So I can tell you right now -- Kingsway, no cards; Voorhees, no cards--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Excuse me.

MR. SHORT: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: What are you talking about?  
What's *no cards*?

MR. SHORT: There's a card that you slide under the door--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

MR. SHORT: --to say whether you're safe or not--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: All right.

MR. SHORT: --when the police come through. I'm sorry I didn't--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes; good.

MR. SHORT: I'm sorry I didn't explain that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you; okay.

MR. SHORT: Also, you have a lot of debate with -- whether or not to use shades. Some-- Voorhees will not allow you to pull down a shade, because the fire marshal came in before and said, "You can't use shades." So you have some districts using shades, you have some districts--

But what I would challenge the State Police, right now, or Camden County -- active shootings last 8 to 12 minutes; they're not long, talked out, hostage situations. The shades should be pulled down in all

schools; in the door and also in the windows. We're all not doing it; we're not all on the same page.

The second thing I want to cover -- and Lori mentioned it -- is simple dots; simple dots on the floor. I mean, these things are not going to cost the State of New Jersey hundreds of thousands of millions of dollars. And she also mentioned -- and I don't care if you laugh at me, I don't care -- because what I want to show you is--

(searches cell phone)

I know, some of the-- I haven't even presented it to my Chief yet; my idea. So what are you going to do when this happens?

(attempts to play audio recording)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Rick, you might want to just describe it, because your time is coming to a close.

MR. SHORT: Okay, okay. All right; I'm sorry.

It's just basically -- what are you going to do when this happens? (recording plays)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We've heard it, Rick.

MR. SHORT: So, what are you going to do?

I think every school teacher should have an emergency pack, like Lori was just saying; and it should be equipped with a fire extinguisher. And the fire extinguisher should be that first line of defense, because what you can't see is what you can't shoot.

And the last thing I want to mention is standards. This is statewide, again; because I'm not just talking about Cherry Hill. You need to have standard things in every school in the State of New Jersey. Yes, it may be cookie-cutter, but you all need live cameras, you all need alarms on

doors; and you don't have them. You all need flashing light switches, which you are doing anyway.

So you need uniformity in the state, and you don't have it. And you will save lives, especially with the fire extinguishers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Well, I think we all agree that there's some uniformity of standards, as you said. Alyssa's Law will provide some of that, so I think we all agree that there should be some uniformity. But we also agree that each district is unique, and we need to present opportunities for our school districts to manage each one as they see fit, but create at least, as the Senator said, at least the benchmark of where they can go to, and then anything above and beyond that, schools should be able to manage on their own.

Any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

MR. SHORT: Thanks.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Closing us off is David Rossi, who yielded his time to Chris.

MR. ROSSI: Chris would have been last. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Well, not necessarily. (laughter)

MR. ROSSI: I see how you guys are.

My name is David Rossi; I am a father of two in the Cherry Hill School District, a senior and a 1st grader.

I will tell you that my 1st grader doesn't really think much about school security; and thankfully for that. My senior, you know, goes

back and forth; sometimes she's terrified to go to school, and other times, you know, she just tries not to think about it.

I'm not going to talk about funding; I think others spoke about funding very well. I know the young lady from Chesterfield spoke very well about the inadequacies in funding -- how it can affect it. And you all know that; you all know how it can affect security.

And as far as security apparatus and infrastructure -- again, that is really a funding issue. But as Rick said, you know, a standard is a really good idea. I think standards at least put us in a place if-- Just say it's a card entry, you know. It puts us in a place where, from a State standpoint, funding, from that point on, will be a local issue.

What I did want to talk a little bit more about, that I heard was-- The Chief of Police from Gloucester Township spoke a lot about a collaborative effort to address potential threats, I suppose you would call it. So when I think about school security, I think of two phases: One, I think of preventing and/or eliminating, or at least addressing, conditions in the community which create a specific individual, a youth in crisis; where, in turn, it's not addressed, and then it begins to create problems throughout the community -- and the school is one, when it comes to a school threat.

The other is, you know, all the apparatus -- whether its police in schools, whether it's self-locking doors, metal detectors, swipe cards -- whatever they are.

And the other Police Chief spoke about, you know, if we're in an active shooter situation, they have failed. I see how they look at it that way.

But back to what the Gloucester Township Police Chief was talking about -- a collaborative effort-- I work with a lot of nonprofits; a number of them in New Jersey. And they deal with people with special needs, people with mental health issues. One of the things that we see is the schools and the community members are not aware of the Children's Continuum of Care Network. And to me -- I wasn't aware of it when I needed it for my children. It was presented to me by a stroke of luck, by the grace of God. I got my 15-year-old into the program because somebody literally tapped me on the shoulder and said, "I think I can help."

One of the failures that I see -- and it's not a failure of anyone, it's just a lack of information on resources. If we can have school Administrators, school teachers, as well as counselors, work together with the police department and others in the law enforcement community to look at these early indicators; and then make sure that everyone, including the parents, know that there are these resources. I come from Cherry Hill; I have tremendous insurance, but I couldn't get what I needed.

I just can imagine that there are other communities out there, as well, in New Jersey, that are struggling with mental health resources; and they're there. New Jersey has a fantastic Children of Care program. and I really believe that that's a big part of what this is. As I said, I'll let the others talk about the apparatus; I'll let the others talk about the funding. But when we talk about safety and security for our students, Administrators and the staff in the building -- everyone looking at potential early threats -- I think is what, as a community-- Are we just trying to make our places safe? We can put fences around them and bulletproof glass if we want, and make sure that no one can get in. But that's really just going to stop a

threat; it's not going to help our community become healthier and thrive and, in turn, address everybody's needs.

And I just wanted you to think about that for a bit when you talk about it, okay?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, David.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

MR. ROSSI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: And I think we heard the Chief from Gloucester, in reference to the collaborative work that can happen when you detect the instability of a youth.

MR. ROSSI: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: You know, in your school systems today, if we wanted to survey our students in reference to bullying -- okay? -- we would have to notify the parents in advance to be able to survey our students.

MR. ROSSI: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: It doesn't create that impromptu ability to evaluate whether or not-- And get the real response from our children about whether or not they are being bullied.

MR. ROSSI: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Because when you want to talk about funding and dollars, there are surveys out there; and there are countries that do this, there are others states that do this. And they can determine whether or not we have significant bullies in our school systems, and we can direct the resources to them. Less funding is needed, actually,

when you only have to work on 5 or 10 children, versus the thousands that we actually have within our student population.

Because if we can help to support those youth to getting better and getting healthier -- okay? -- then the community will be healthier.

MR. ROSSI: And when we talk about standards of apparatus, I think we should also look at standards when it comes to collaborative efforts. I mean, I would nominate the Chief from Gloucester Township to work on a committee to try to put those standards-- I'd be more than happy to volunteer as well. I think that collaborative effort has to be part of the standards when it comes to looking at it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, David.

MR. ROSSI: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We've heard from everybody who has submitted a slip. We appreciate all of you and your attentiveness.

And I personally want to thank the legislators; and for all of you -- many of these legislators do not live locally; they've traveled hours to get here to be participating in this.

I want to thank Camden County, again; I want to thank OLS; the members -- from my heart.

Senator, would you like to close out?

SENATOR RUIZ: I just want to thank everyone for being courageous, whether you're a student or -- to a mother who has undergone the inexplicable that no one ever wants to deal with, to the community activists who are here, and to public safety professionals who are sharing insight.

I did an interview earlier today, and what I shared was that even public safety personnel are saying, “You just don’t need more of us.” We need a comprehensive approach when it comes to securing the safety of our children.

Thank you to all Committee members, and thank you to the Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you all very much.

We’re adjourned; thank you.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**