

Committee Meeting

of

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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

LOCATION: Paul Robeson Campus Center
Rutgers University-Newark
Newark, New Jersey

DATE: April 23, 2018
4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEES PRESENT:

Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Chair
Assemblywoman Pamela R. Lampitt, Chair
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling
Assemblyman Gary S. Schaer
Assemblywoman Britnee N. Timberlake
Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker
Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso
Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi



ALSO PRESENT:

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

Elizabeth Mahn
Senate Majority
Rebecca Panitch
Senate Republican
Committee Aides

Kaylee E. McGuire
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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New Jersey State Legislature

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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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 23, 2018

The public may address comments and questions to Kathleen Fazzari, Anita M. 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 23, 2018 at 4:00 PM at Rutgers University-Newark, Paul Robeson Campus Center, Essex Room, 350 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Newark, New Jersey 07102.

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 4/13/18

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SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Chair): Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the joint hearing on public safety in our schools.

Roll call.

MS. FAZZARI (Committee Aide): Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Present.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Lampitt.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PAMELA R. LAMPITT (Chair):

Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Jasey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY (Co-Chair): Here.

SENATOR RUIZ: I know we have other members who are making their way up here.

I just want to take an opportunity to welcome everybody to the third public safety hearing that we're having, in a joint consensus form, with the Assembly. When Pam reached out to my office -- I'll repeat the same thing -- I thought it was a great idea.

We started in Trenton with some professionals, to talk about what different things people are doing and how we should have, perhaps, a basic measure across the board for schools; but then allow schools to, kind of, jump off of that to create their own public safety kind of policies around school and gun safety.

I will say this -- which I have said at every one of the three hearings -- guns are not something that just impact our school systems in a mass (indiscernible) level. Guns and gun violence are a public health crisis, one that impacts many of our communities on a daily basis. And so when we talk about these conversations, we also keep in mind, as policymakers,

when we move forward that we're going to create better legislation to protect our children, whether they're in a classroom setting, on their stoop, or walking on their way to work.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Good afternoon, everybody.

I am Assemblywoman Pam Lampitt, and I am very pleased to be co-hosting this event with Senator Teresa Ruiz here in Newark.

As she mentioned, we did our first one in Trenton; then we did the second one in Cherry Hill, which is where I hail from. And I am very pleased to be up here, as we needed to hear from a cross-section of our state about what was going on in our schools.

We've heard from experts, and we've heard from individuals that it is not just about guns in our schools and gun safety; but it's truly, you know, the gun issue throughout the state. But it's also the mental health issue throughout our state. We only need to look to the most recent situation in Nashville, correct?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Nashville.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Yes, Nashville -- in reference to somebody who opened fire at a Waffle House.

But we certainly know that our schools should be establishments of learning; and within those establishments it's not only our students who we are concerned about, but it's the Administrators, it's the teachers, it's the janitors, and it is the people who work in the lunchroom as well.

So we care about everybody's health and welfare, and we truly understand that the dynamics of the schools that are here in our urban setting of Newark are very different than the schools in Cherry Hill. But as

we said, trying to create at least a flat standard of what we feel to be the minimum standards is something that we want to improve upon. Here in New Jersey, we've said that we have great gun laws; we keep on improving upon those. So why not keep on improving upon the guidelines that we've established for safety in our schools?

So thank you, and I look forward to hearing everybody's testimony.

And we've been joined by -- Kathy, do you want to take another roll call?

Sorry.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Timberlake.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: Present.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Present.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblyman Zwicker.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZWICKER: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblyman Schaer.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAEER: Present.

SENATOR RUIZ: So welcome to the greatest city in the Garden State, and that's my hometown, in the District that I represent. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I'll let her have that one.

SENATOR RUIZ: The City of Newark, the largest city. What else can I say? The best city--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I know; it is.

SENATOR RUIZ: The city that's on the short list for Amazon; I mean, I can go on. (laughter)

So what I would like to do is -- first I'm going to call up our Public Safety Director from the City of Newark, Police Director Anthony Ambrose, to come up. I'm not sure if you're accompanied by any staff -- to give us remarks.

And I really want say--

Oh, you want to bring everyone up as a panel? Okay.

Joined with our Superintendent, Robert Gregory, Newark Public Schools; Eric Ingold, Executive Director, School Safety and Security Service; and Charles Koonce, Newark Public Schools.

So I am just going to ask that if you have any written testimony, that you submit your written testimony and that you summarize what you have.

And just a point of personal privilege -- to show how shared services and government works, I want to personally thank our Public Safety Director who was today in Trenton at a bail reform meeting, bringing people together. So when all levels of government have conversations, we can create better policy for our residents.

Director.

A N T H O N Y F. A M B R O S E: Okay, thank you.

This is the best city in the entire universe. (laughter) It's where I was born and raised.

I just want to start by saying -- give you a little opening on guns; I'm sure you hear it all the time, and I just heard some of it.

But we have the most stringent gun laws in the country; but yet, the guns that make it to our inner cities mainly come from Pennsylvania and down South. They either make it on 80, 78, or the Turnpike.

For instance, on Saturday, police officers confiscated nine weapons in the City of Newark at one location. Five of them were assault weapons; one was an AK-47. So I think when we confiscate these guns, and we look at the origin of these guns -- which we do when we work closely with the ATF -- Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms -- their origin always comes back to either Pennsylvania or down South -- anywhere from Virginia, North Carolina, and down South.

You know, it's very interesting that I happened to be in Florida -- and I have a picture -- last week; a big, big bulletin board, a big poster board, on the side of the road said, "AK-47 for sale." And it's interesting, because those guns make it up to the State of New Jersey, into our communities.

We've been lucky, as far as active violence in schools. But in urban settings like Newark, Camden, Paterson, Jersey City, East Orange, Orange, where violence is more prevalent, some nights we have multiple people shot with these weapons. Last year, in Newark, we had over 300 people shot; and one of the reasons was because of the high capacity magazines that these weapons have, where three and four people -- maybe five people -- were shot at one location in the legs; some were fatal.

So I want to start with that.

The other part of it is -- it's something that the Newark Police Division and the Board of Education came together under Mayor Baraka,

when the schools came back to the city. And we met, probably, about three weeks ago, and we started on this on Thursday. That it's important that -- and I heard it again -- that one thing I want to know is -- it's important to teach the student body what to do, and the teachers. But is it important -- does the cafeteria worker know, does the janitor know, does the school crossing guard a block away know, or right outside the school know? I think that's important. They have to be a part.

There is really no-- We could do all the tabletop demonstrations in the world. We have to do active, at the site, with the people involved.

The other part of it is the parent. I think the Parent Teacher Association and the parents need to be also part of this -- what they expect in case this does occur.

Now, if you have children or you have loved ones who are in schools, the first thing that happens is, it's hysteria once you find out there's something happening at the school. And I think that's something that we can never practice enough for, but it's something that we have to get the parent or guardian acclimated to -- what to do if this, in fact, occurs.

So I think that -- you know, they say an active shooter occurs -- evolves around 3 to 15 minutes, and it's over. Immediate deployment; stop the shooting victim (*sic*); police are trained to move in quickly. But I think, more importantly, is that the police departments and other law enforcement within the confines, when there are active shooters, have to have information sharing, have radio communication, and have a plan devised where they are not going to devise it that morning or that afternoon when it's happening. So it's important.

And mostly in New Jersey -- and I can speak for Essex County -- we do. But I think that's important that there is a written plan of what mutual aid-- Because when you have an active shooter, you know, there are police departments that aren't -- that don't have the capacity of large departments. So they are already on the same radio frequency they share with surrounding towns and counties. And that's important.

It's important also, you know, when you talk about the blueprints of the schools. The blueprints of schools should be given out to law enforcement authorities, as much as fire departments, because if something does occur, that we can't practice when we get there -- ask people, you know, "Where's room 306? Where's the cafeteria located?" You know, we need to see it right away. So I think it's important that all blueprints of schools should be obtained, and should be on file, and also even computerized. That's important.

I think it's also important when this is going on that we plan for the actual shooting that is occurring -- the active part of it. But it's the days and weeks to follow I think are important, because that -- the healing process. And I think that the officers who respond have a healing process; the students definitely have a healing process; the employees, the teachers in that school definitely have it. And I think that's something that has to be -- training, and you have to prepare for that.

And I think some of the best practices that we can get is from Parkland that happened back on February 14, and in other schools. I mean, you look at Columbine; it happened years ago. We just celebrated it. And you look at Parkland. What did we do then, and what did we do now? And I think that's a gap analysis where we talk about where we were, where

we're at, and where we want to be. And I think where we want to be is to ensure that all facets -- from the student, to the employees, to the parents, to the emergency personnel -- are all together and in sync. And it may seem hard, but the only way we can get this down the best is practice.

I can remember as a young kid going to school here in Newark -- the fire drill. You know, we would mess up on the way going out many times and get hollered at. But, you know, the teacher used to tell us, "Practice makes perfect." And by the time the second fire drill, or the third drill, we knew that we had to go outside; we knew where we had to stand away from the school, where you had to wait for our name to be called to make sure that we all made it out.

So I think training, information sharing, is important; relocation, once outside the building, is important; staging areas outside. And it's not hard, because I think each municipality is tasked with-- The smaller your municipality is, the easier it is. But you're tasked with so many schools within your confines, and say, "Okay, if something happens, there has to be a devised plan for--" There's no cookie cutter as far as staging areas; as far as the location where this occurs. It could happen in different locations. I know we can be in the South Ward, on the busy intersection; and then we can be at a school down in the East Ward, which is -- has very narrow streets and it's hard to get to. So you have to, kind of, have a different plan and a different egress route to these locations.

But I think the most important thing is to make sure that those four components that I talked about all have subcomponents to them for the training that we must do. And I think it's important to hear from parents -- what they see, and what they hear, and what they would like to

see. And I think it's -- believe it or not, I think the student should also participate, maybe, in a questionnaire. You know, what-- They know the definition of an *active shooter*. You know, a lot of times these active shooters go in and they target someone who they had an issue with. And there are always telltale signs; but it's always after-the-fact, as you hear this a lot.

Just what happened over the weekend in Tennessee; that individual was a hero who grabbed that individual. There could have been a lot more dead. You know, in these types of active shooters in the schools -- when you feel that you can overpower -- we don't tell people to do it, but if you think you could -- okay? -- you do it. But kids -- and I say anywhere from kindergarten to 12th grade -- as they get older, I'm sure they think different; they're more agile, they're more risky. But that's something that we can't teach, but I think we should actually practice in a lot of these towns; I know almost every country does it. It's important to keep practicing and get input from every person who is involved, as far as, you know, again, the student, the parent, the first responder.

I hate to tell you this -- and I've gone to a lot of training -- you know, we even should bring the medical examiner's office into training. Because if it does occur, all right, they have to be part of the plan. We can't plan on that day, you know? If there are mass casualties, how would each county -- how would they be handled? You know, a notification process; you know, we do it and it's not that we're callous. But we do it a lot; but you know, we do it a lot more frequently here in the city with homicides.

But you take a town -- you take this magnitude of a school, an active shooter with young kids -- that's a lot different. Police -- believe it or not, I've known police officers who went off this job as a profession -- gave

it up -- after seeing young kids die in the street, or get hit by a car, or get shot, or suffering. So it pays a toll on the police officer also.

And I think the mental health part of it is important. Pre and post -- I think it's important having them at the table talking about different types of behaviors that can be recognized. A lot of times, another part of it is, is the juvenile justice system should be involved in it, because the juvenile justice system has the files and has the records of juveniles who have priors. And when do we hear about it? We hear about it after it happens.

So I think that there's an early warning system for police officers; there should be an early warning system in New Jersey for juveniles with this type of behavior.

I think that was it.

So that's all, really, I have to say.

And I will pass it on to my counterparts.

A. ROBERT GREGORY: Thank you very much for the opportunity to be heard.

I want to echo some of the comments made by Director Ambrose.

I will say, in the City of Newark, we've attempted to be as proactive as possible in addressing this. And we knew we couldn't do this work alone, and so we thought it was important that we met with Director Ambrose. The Mayor was resilient in pulling us all together so that we could ensure that our communication systems are tight; but also examine what we have done, to date, to prepare for such an unfortunate occurrence if, in fact, it happens.

And one of the things that we determined was -- there was a need for us to be explicit in training every adult who works in our school system. And we did not want to do that training in isolation. I have my Director of Security here. But what we really thought it was important for us to do was to partner with the city, the Public Safety Department under the direction of Director Ambrose, and host this training which will occur on Wednesday, April 25. That is a District-wide training for all employees who work in the Newark Public Schools to review what the protocols are for active shooters.

We also did not want to address this in isolation; and so we realized we were dealing with a lot of students who have mental health issues. And we've partnered with Rutgers, right here in Newark; we've also partnered with our health community; and we are also making additional investments in social workers at all of our schools to support our students as they are going through very -- challenges in their lives.

The other thing that we don't take lightly here is ways we are resolving incidents that may occur between students. And so we have rethought some of our discipline systems, and have a protocol in place to resolve conflicts. So that we feel very comfortable, when an issue arises at the school level, that we can walk away that day with the proper people being contacted to ensure nothing happens as a result of whatever the incident may be.

I'm going to pass it to Eric Ingold, who could also fill you in on some additional steps that we're taking, as a school district, to be proactive in our approach to potential issues.

E R I C I N G O L D: Good afternoon, everyone.

SENATOR RUIZ: Can you just please state your name and where you're from?

MR. INGOLD: I'm Eric Ingold; the Executive Director of Safety for Newark Public Schools; I-N-G-O-L-D.

So in addition to the safety drills, and the restorative practices, and things of that nature, we also take a look at the safe passage of the students going to and from, based on the areas in which the schools are located.

So we partnered with Mayor Baraka's team of the Office of Education -- from the Office of Education, relative to what's called the *Community Safe School Project*; which is, essentially, safe passages.

So we determined the most direct route, based on geographical location -- whether or not it's an industrial area, residential area -- and the traffic patterns in the immediate area of the school. We provided that data to the Newark Police Department for an overlay of crime statistics, which would indicate the time of day the incidents occurred, the type of crime that is happening -- whether it's violence, narcotic-related -- so the route can be either just a block east or a block west, so they're not going through a high-crime area en route to school.

And then once the route is established, the Newark Community Street Team is then deployed out along those routes. The information is given to the Police Department so they're aware of what the routes are. So during shift changes and their regular patrols in the morning and at dismissal, the Newark Police Department can essentially saturate the area where the route is to expect the most amount of students on that specific route.

The Newark Community Street Team then takes up position there; and reports back to the school, or reports back to the Police Department, if there's an emergency. And then *Safe Havens* are identified throughout the route on the locations.

So if a child has an issue or there is an emergency, there's a pre-determined location for the child to go -- whether it's a store, a firehouse, police station, post office, and things of that nature.

So right now we have that operational as a pilot at several schools, and we're going to eventually roll that out city-wide, district-wide.

And then, I know it's an issue throughout the state, and one of the things that we have found a challenge is the physical building security. So when the buildings were constructed, security wasn't first and foremost on the minds of the individuals who were building the schools. So the older schools -- that poses a challenge.

Just to give you an example: Some of our schools -- we have metal detectors; every school we're -- we have a security guard in. So anytime a visitor or student comes into our building, they are coming in direct contact with the security guard. Security guards receive training in customer service; the customer service approaches security, so they are essentially a security guard and also a greeter for the students and the visitors into the building.

In addition, some of the schools -- a percentage of the schools have metal detectors. Once everybody is inside that building, we know that that building is secured. The issue is, we have to maintain the secure facility. So in order to do so, we have to ensure that there are no breaches from any other exterior doors.

So one of our schools has 79 access points to the exterior. So just to put that into perspective -- a brand new school, equal in size that was recently constructed, has 13 entrances and exits accessible from the exterior. So we have 79 locations where there is a potential for a breach.

Now, there's technology available to address that; whereas, if the door is opened it automatically triggers an alarm, activates a camera. The security guard monitoring is aware and can radio for assistance. But we have the students who can leave through those doors; we have students who can open the door for somebody else to come in. And that can be an access point that circumvents the metal detector protocols that we have in place, as well as the bag checks and the visitor protocols.

So it's critical that the older facilities receive an upgrade relative to, not necessarily structurally, but with technology. And the technology is available; and we're in the process of doing that. But we have 67 buildings; I would say 90 percent of them are pre-1960, and some dating back to the early 1900s. So it's critical that we address that the best that we possibly can.

I think that's pretty much it.

SENATOR RUIZ: I do have a question, before the Assistant Superintendent; I think you're going to weigh in.

When we had our meeting in Trenton, the person in charge of Public Safety from the State Department actually highlighted something that Newark did -- and I don't know if this is in your memory bank. If it's not, you can share with me the details later -- which I thought was very smart.

You actually did a drill outside of the school hours during a parent-teacher night.

MR. INGOLD: Yes; we did that at Science Park.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay. Can you just--

MR. INGOLD: Yes, and we're going to also do that -- we're actually going to do that-- We have plans to do that with the Police Department over the summer -- a large scale -- and we're going to actually invite PTA, PTO members, Administrators, and anybody else who wants to attend at Science Park during the summer, when the schools are not occupied by students.

SENATOR RUIZ: And it was a scheduled drill--

MR. INGOLD: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: --so people knew what was going to happen when you were there?

MR. INGOLD: No.

SENATOR RUIZ: It was unscheduled.

MR. INGOLD: When we do the drill, sometimes we don't schedule-- The element of surprise in scheduling the drills-- Obviously, we try to do it -- convenience around certain testing and certain critical times in the school. But we will go unannounced, with the Police Department, to a location; approach the first person we see and say, "Active shooter lockdown; active shooter lockdown protocols initiated."

SENATOR RUIZ: That's great.

MR. INGOLD: The building is cleared; and that is the best way to test it.

You have children outside for lunch; what are you going to do in that situation? You have children in the cafeteria, which is difficult to navigate in an emergency situation, specifically a lockdown. But the element of surprise during these drills is critical. You can't have it preplanned, because that somewhat defeats the purpose--

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MR. INGOLD: --because everybody is ready for it, and everybody is expecting it. When it's least likely to happen is when we really want to do it.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you; we thought that was actually a brilliant idea. That's something that all districts should do -- on a game night, you know?

MR. INGOLD: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: You get -- the volume increases extraordinarily, and you have to worry about people getting out.

MR. INGOLD: Right; and you get some staff members who may not be familiar with it at that time, because they're working something else from another location. So it's the best way to test and the best way to learn. I agree.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

C H A R L E S K O O N C E: I'm Charles Koonce, Special Assistant, Student Support Services.

In dealing with student conflict and student maladaptive behavior; we've taken a restorative approach to address the social-emotional needs of our young people.

We've dealt with gender-based education; we've dealt with generational theory, which deals with understanding generations -- in particular, *Generation Z*, as it relates to social media, and all that happens, and their traits, and their wants, and things of that nature. We train our principals to understand how they operate in our day. So there are so many conflicts that occur online, through social media; and it's important that principals are aware of what's going on online, so we've taken that approach.

And again, we've taken the social-emotional approach in dealing with maladaptive behavior; in particular our young men -- we've developed gender-based education programs, as well as for our young women -- gender-based educational programs to handle their needs.

MR. GREGORY: And one point I just want to emphasize is our attempt to be as proactive as possible in looking at ways to prevent any incidents from occurring. But also ensuring that we have very tight protocols around communication so that support can occur in a millisecond. And we feel very prepared, moving forward, because of some of the work we've done leading up to today.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Assemblyman Schaer, you have a question?

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAEER: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Just as a matter of curiosity, are some schools more at risk than others?

MR. GREGORY: That's an excellent question.

MR. INGOLD: So if you're talking about the physical layout, or geographical location, or--

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: All of the above, and then some.

MR. INGOLD: I would say that some schools are at risk more so than others to a varying degree. I mean, it depends upon-- No school is immune from an active shooter potential; every school has the potential to be targeted for or by an active shooter. There is no question about that.

MR. GREGORY: And we purposely try to treat all of the schools the same exact way and prepare them for the same incident, regardless of where they are geographically located.

MR. AMBROSE: I think that's where the Police Department has to have strong dialogues with the Board of Education, and make sure that we share information as far as individuals who are attending schools, who are arrested for weapons, or have the propensity to carry weapons; because that's a tell-tale sign.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Just to follow up on -- a quick question about that. . .

So the older buildings, because of their nature -- how many doors that they have; their egress points -- is it something thereby you've worked with Building Code and Enforcement as to whether or not those doors-- Well, there's a reason why the same square footage -- as you pointed out -- has less doors. Is there something with building codes that could close off those egresses permanently?

MR. INGOLD: Some of that is the case; but then others are their emergency egresses; and that poses the problem. I mean, around an auditorium you could have four doors clustered; one of those could be the emergency egress. However, you know, we could secure the others, but that still leaves that one door.

So yes, there is limited that can be done to consolidate that and seal those doors off. But the vast majority of the issue is the fact that the egress lane -- the lane to the egress or the emergency exit -- is isolated to the point where it needs a door, it needs an access point; and we've certainly looked into that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: All right.

Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I have two quick questions.

One -- I don't know if even anybody up here knows the answer -- but in talking about blueprints and having them accessible and available to police and fire, one concern that popped up into my head is whether or not we currently exempt them from OPRA; and whether or not it's something that, if somebody had a nefarious intent, they could go in right now and secure the blueprints for our schools.

MR. INGOLD: So that would be security sensitive in nature, and that information would not be -- would not fall under OPRA if we were to share that with the Police Department. Because if we had them in our possession now, as a District, they are not OPRA-able. So we're transferring it over to the Police Department for their purposes, for the same purposes of ensuring the safety.

That information, if it were to become public, would create an immense risk; and under OPRA, we would be mandated to submit those.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay; so it's specific that it's excluded.

Okay, good.

MR. INGOLD: Correct. And it would be-- I mean, theoretically, it could be OPRA'd; but it would be heavily redacted to the point where you can't -- there's nothing to be determined.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay.

MR. INGOLD: Right? So in addition to that, with the blueprints -- when we transfer that over, we've done things such as provide key locations in the building and that information to the Police Department. Where's the camera room? Where's the surveillance equipment? They can send somebody right to that location. So each location, each blueprint, has specifics for that -- to share the information to the responding officers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: And the second, kind of, follow-up question that -- I know a lot of the police and superintendents in the District that I represent are grappling with -- is it seems easier to be able to harden the asset inside the school. And whether or not it's having SROs, or security guards, or ensuring the ingress or egress; but it's how do we properly address what takes place when everybody is being dropped off in the morning, or when the school bell ends, or when people leave for lunch? And how can we lessen the risk during those periods of times, if at all?

So I don't know if that's--

MR. INGOLD: Yes, that is a challenge.

Exterior -- when the students go out during recreation -- you know, we've done assessments -- safety assessments at certain locations and we had to alter the way that the students -- one of our high schools -- we had to alter the way they do their lunch breaks, specifically out of concern for safety.

So it's assessed; we look at it. It's very, very difficult, because there is no -- like you said, your exterior -- so there is no protection around. So you have to just do an assessment; determine what the probability is that something could potentially happen, where that threat would come from, and then guide yourself accordingly.

MR. AMBROSE: That's a good point, because I know there's a new school -- a County school -- being built here in Essex County. And that's one of the things that-- In fact, I just had a conversation with someone here.

It's important -- in the morning and the afternoon, they are the busiest times -- that the active shooter doesn't have to enter the school. You have parents dropping off children; and there should be designated areas, and actually it should be staggered, if it can be.

Also the other part is when they are released from school. Not only, you know, in an urban setting, not only-- A lot of the kids in urban settings -- they take mass transit or public transportation. That's important to know, because that could occur at those locations.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Timberlake, did you have a question?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: Yes, I did.

And let me just say, Director Ambrose, that I know with your experience at the helm, that I certainly do feel safer throughout Essex County, not just in Newark.

MR. AMBROSE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: I do have some questions about what is done whenever children do show a warning sign.

We often see in the news that there were tell-tale signs that someone may have had a mental issue, which may or may not be the case in this whole national situation now. Allegedly the father took his gun; gave the gun back. Who knows? But what is done with that information? Because it seems as if the ball gets dropped somewhere along the line. Maybe it starts in the household; and then the police department is informed and the community knows. And we're just trying to get an understanding so we can legislate, and hopefully be better at preventing situations.

But what happens?

MR. AMBROSE: What I'm going to do, on the police end -- we usually get it after the Board of Education gets it. So one thing I could tell you is that, since Parkland, we've had, probably, in the City of Newark, I would say four to five incidents where individuals -- we have Juvenile Services within the Police Division -- where individuals either said something, exhibited some type of behavior, or were on some type of social media, talking about it or actually showing a gun.

So we get it last; we get it from the Board of Education, then we work together. And you can't take it for granted; I mean, basically, you know someone's -- a parent definitely would say, "Oh, no, no, he always does that," or "He always shows (indiscernible)." Yet, you can't take it for granted; and it's something that has to be addressed. It ignites from the Board of Education, then the police have to follow up.

MR. KOONCE: In addition, we have our RTI model, our *Response to Intervention* model, which is a multi-tiered process that deals with student discipline and academics. Starting with Tier 1 -- which is your basic

rules and regulations, your reward system, your data collection, your social workers, and your psychologists; where they review data.

Then you have your Tier 2, which basically is your one-on-one support; and your behavioral check-ins and checkouts with adults who care about the student, who have a relationship with the student.

And then you have your Tier 3, which is your FBA/BIP process; your functional behavioral assessment, and your behavioral intervention plan; students with IEPs, who have mental and social-emotional disorders. And we ramp up the support based on the need. Any time a student makes a threat or exhibits suicidal behavior -- things of that nature -- we dispatch, we deploy our social work people, our psychologist people, our guidance people, to immediately provide counseling for the student, alert the parent, and outline a system of support for the student.

When the student commits an infraction, we have our restorative center, where the students are taken out of the mainstream population and provide one-on-one support at an alternate location; and a plan is outlined for that student. And then that information is shared back at the home school with the guidance counselors, the psychologists, the social workers, the teachers as well, to identify the triggers that that student may have, to teach that student to reverse their maladaptive behavior. And that's the process of getting to the root causes of the maladaptive behavior.

So we have the multi-tiered process through RTI, Response Intervention; PBS, Positive Behavior Supports for our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: Thank you.

And Madam Chair, through you?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN TIMBERLAKE: I also had a question regarding the blueprints.

Would it be helpful to, maybe, work in conjunction with Building and Codes to get the blueprints over -- for the schools? But then, also, I'm thinking other major public places -- malls, hospitals -- so that the Police Department have them. Obviously, not residential homes, but for large places where the public gathers.

MR. AMBROSE: Well, the schools, we definitely-- We have the schools. And, in fact, before I came back here to Newark, I was at the Prosecutor's Office, as you know. And we've dealt with the malls; we have two malls -- we have the Short Hills Mall and Livingston Mall. We've dealt with the police chiefs up there; we have their blueprints, we have done exercises up there as far as even doing an exercise where both malls have active shooters at the same time -- deplete my resources, and what we would do.

So we do have the -- the County has the blueprints for them, and the city has the blueprints on the schools.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I just have a follow-up question for you, sir.

Do you do that type of assessment sort of in a roundup? Do you, at any point in time, gather the teachers and the therapists, on a proactive basis, to say, "Charles is okay; Joe is okay; Susie is okay." Do you do that on a proactive basis so that you have an understanding?

You're nodding your head; good.

MR. GREGORY: Yes; thank you.

So each one of our schools has what we call a *Student Support Team*. That team meets on a weekly basis. They begin the year looking at the overall picture, in terms of climate and culture in a school building.

But then teachers begin to make recommendations throughout the year about students who are exhibiting behaviors that are of concern, or students who may go through adverse experiences that may manifest themselves in a negative way in our schools. So that is a weekly meeting; and those problems get escalated relatively fast.

Charles, do you want to add anything?

MR. KOONCE: Yes. And that team reviews data on a daily basis, and they have a referral process to provide additional supports for students when needed. And as the Superintendent indicated, the SST, which is *Student Support Team* -- they meet on a regular basis to do that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Charles, I'm sorry, on your slip-- I apologize. What Department are you in? What's your title?

MR. KOONCE: I am a Special Assistant with the Office of Student Support Services.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE: We didn't get that, because there were a lot of Ss. (laughter)

MR. AMBROSE: Sorry. (laughter)

MR. KOONCE: Student Support Services, Special Assistant.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblywoman Jasey, do you have a question?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: No?

Assemblyman Houghtaling?

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Yes; thank you.

I have a statement and a question.

I'm from Monmouth County; and Friday, we just had an active shooter drill for lessons learned; and it went very well.

They didn't have blueprints of the facility, but they -- what they ended up going through is a *quadrant system* -- making sure all the doors are all numbered. And through the County, that's going to be part of their emergency services -- all the schools will be like that.

And it was very interesting, because there was someone there from United Airlines at Newark Airport who wanted to see how it went, and how the quadrant process was working; because they want to do it there at Newark Airport.

My question is, you know, I've grown up through a lot of different things; you know, the nuclear disasters, and when we had to hide under the desks, and things like that. But it was always the fire drill that we had to -- when the bell rang we had to leave the school immediately.

You know, things have changed now. Do you think that needs to be looked at by the State?

MR. INGOLD: I believe so, yes.

I think that the technology that we have exists now -- if the fire alarm is pulled, we have somebody who can be at that location within seconds to determine whether or not there is a true emergency.

My concern -- and I'm sure a lot of people in this room have the same concern -- is that if you want to do something, if you want to get the children out of a secure environment and put them into potentially harm's way, pulling the fire alarm is the quickest way to empty a building.

We've had incidents where a fire alarm is pulled because there is a large fight that's planned. We've had incidents where we received information that there may be a potential shooting outside, and we've had a fire alarm pulled.

We have had information in the past that there were guns stashed in proximity to the school; and one of the things that they planned on doing was having the fire alarm pulled to access it. We had to get canine out, search the perimeter for the weapons; and, thankfully, nothing happened.

The fire alarm is used; it's a great resource, but there are ways to identify the best possible use for it. I mean, I'm sorry -- not the best use, but the best way to approach it once it's triggered. And I think that with the communication set-up that we have in the schools now, as opposed to the technology back when they were placed into the schools, we can communicate within seconds to determine whether or not it's an actual pull. We can review footage; we can send somebody to the physical location to make those determinations, before we make a final determination to evacuate.

Could be tiered with two separate -- I'm sorry -- could be tiered with two separate alarms, okay? The one alarm is essentially a warning; within a few seconds, you have to get the determination that it's actually legitimate, and then it triggers the actual evacuation alarm.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: I was just going say, I agree with you.

MR. GREGORY: Just to add to that.

One of the things our Principals do, on a routine basis, when there is a fire alarm, is when the alarm is activated -- once there is confirmation that it is an official fire drill, they get on the loudspeaker and reinforce that to the faculty and students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Gentlemen, we can't thank you enough. And we know that the Newark School System is in really wonderful hands, and well thought out; and we appreciate it very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

MR. AMBROSE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Next, we have Mr. Steven Forte, Superintendent of Schools, from the Denville Township School District; and Chief Christopher Wagner, Denville Township Police Department.

We apologize; we knew that you needed to leave, but we appreciate you staying and adding some valuable information to us.

Just state your name before you-- And the speaker in the middle; the microphone in the middle.

C H I E F C H R I S T O P H E R W A G N E R: Good afternoon.

Chief Christopher Wagner, with the Denville Township Police Department.

I've been a Police Officer for 30 years; I've been the Chief of Police for 10 years in Denville.

We're a suburban community, about 15,000 people and about 15 square miles. And we're a little bit unique in Denville in that we have 8 school buildings with 5 distinct school districts. Mr. Forte here will talk about his District. We have a Regional High School with a separate

Superintendent and School Board; a County Vocational High School with a separate Superintendent and School Board; two Catholic schools with a separate Diocesan Superintendent and School Board; and then a school for special needs for autistic children with, again, a separate Superintendent.

What we were asked to come and talk about today -- and what I'm most proud of -- is partnerships. We have had, in Denville, for many years -- before I was even the Chief of Police -- a strong partnership between all of those school Superintendents and Principals, and all of the members of the Police Department.

We've been working on school security very thoroughly; and more importantly and urgently, since the attack at Sandy Hook is when we really began to ramp it up. But we had been working for years before that even.

The partnerships are important because the partnership builds trust. And I know that when I have a conversation with Superintendent Forte about my needs to provide security at the school, that Mr. Forte will listen to my needs and understand what I need to do. And conversely, he will understand that I get it -- that it's a school; that we're talking about kindergarten kids, who are 5, and kindergarten teachers who have 25, 5- or 6-year old children. And that although their security is vitally important, we can't ask them to do what we ask high school or college-age students to do.

And in addition to that, we talked earlier -- people have testified about maps and blueprints. We have, in every single police car in Denville, a book of maps of every school and some other critical infrastructure. And when we went to the school and said, "Could we have

it?" the Superintendent gave it to us and said, "Will it help you help us?" And the reply was "Yes," and so we have it.

In addition to that, what we're going to talk about -- kind of a *wheel of security*. We were able to communicate with each school; and in every one of the schools we have a color-coded key per school. And the school districts were able to get their buildings keyed to one -- in one or two cases, two keys. And the police officers have the keys to the school. So that in the event of a lockdown, where you have to imagine -- in a lockdown -- they call it a *lockdown* -- the school is locked. The responding police can't get in the front door; you have to have a key. And you can imagine, as a Police Chief, going to the Superintendent and saying, "Listen, I want a key to all your school buildings." The Superintendent is saying, "I'm not giving you a key to all -- what do you want that for?" Right?

But again, the trust has been established for so many years, that when we asked, every one of those eight schools -- we got a single key for every one of these schools, and every police officer has it.

So a lot of what we work on is that trust and cooperation. And it happens all day long. It's not just in the event that there is an emergency, or once a year; it's all day long.

I began working, proudly, many years ago, on the Class 3 Special Legislation. And as the President of the State Chiefs Association in New Jersey, it was something that I worked hard on. This year we put our first Class 3 Special Police Officers in our schools; and we're working on five more for this upcoming school year, the 2018-2019 school year.

Our Police Department visits the schools every day; and monthly, we plan the school emergency drills with the school. The school

doesn't schedule them on their own; we plan them with the school. And the police officers working-- It's a little different in Denville; we have 32 policemen, versus a couple hundred or thousands here in the City of Newark. But we all attend, myself included, each lockdown at each school monthly. So that the police officers are in every school at least once a month, and they know where's the cafeteria, where's the front office, where's the library, right? You don't want to be told to go to the men's bathroom on the C Wing because there is somebody in there with a gun, and have to ask, "Where's the C Wing?" right? It's too late for that.

So the partnerships, and the trust, and the collaboration are really important. And one of the things that I think Steve will talk about is, maybe, the personalities. We happen to get along very well together; and we complement each other well in terms of school security. But if I didn't, I'd have to identify that and just find someone else in my Police Department who can. Maybe my School Resource Officer should be the go-to; or maybe a Lieutenant, or maybe a brand-new patrol officer should be the go-to and work with Mr. Forte. But the bottom line is, you have to identify somebody who can do it.

I'll start on one or two of these, and then I'll let Mr. Forte jump in as well.

This is critically important. We live in a world, in law enforcement -- we don't live in the *if* world; we live in the *when* world. We have been fortunate, in the State of New Jersey, that we're not on the active-shooter-in-a-school list. But the question is, *when*. Will it be right now, while I'm sitting here; will it be tomorrow; will it be graduation day; or it will be the first day of school next school year, when a kid had all

summer to sit home and fester about a bad school year, and he decides to take it out on his first day next year?

So we live in the *when*; *when* is it going to happen? And to the question of, I think, the Assemblyman earlier, it doesn't matter where -- City of Newark, Township of Denville, town of Blairstown -- every single school is vulnerable; and it's why our motto is that we have to do everything right, every day. It's not something where you lock your doors on Monday, but you don't worry if the doors are locked on Tuesday; or you lock them in the morning, but you don't care after lunch. It has to be all day long, every single day.

To the mental health question -- one of the things we're working on back in Morris County, with Sheriff Gannon, is a program called *RSVP, Responsible School Violence Prevention*. And the cornerstone of this new program -- the Sheriff has partnered with the Secret Service of the United States, the FBI, some authors of the after-action report to the Virginia Tech shooting, and the National Association of School Psychiatrists to look at pre-event indicators.

When a person walks into a school and a gun goes *bang*, we've lost; we lost. The object is for -- for instance, in Denville, I've received, since Parkland, three photographs, on my cell phone at home, of a gun on social media. A student saw a picture of a gun; sent it to their parent; their parent called the school; the school the police; and we conducted an investigation. We found out that, in all three cases, there was no planned violence; everything was okay. But the object is that we found out before it, investigated it, determined the threat not to be lethal or dangerous, and then moved from there. In those cases, where there was danger, the

partnership in the school is that we communicate and we mandate a mental health evaluation by a mental health professional through a matrix of threat analysis. You know, did somebody just have a bad day and say, "You know what, I'm going to blow the school up." Or does this kid really mean, "I'm going to blow the school up"?

So I think that's really important; that's where we win -- when it doesn't fall through the cracks, when no one gets the chance to actually get to the school in the morning or later on that afternoon. The minute someone hears, we encourage people to see something, and say something.

So I think that's going to be really important when it comes out.

And then another for us is -- we're in Denville, New Jersey; we're not in Newark in Essex County. And our intention -- one of my things is, I don't want to have prisons for schools; I want to have a castle for a school. A castle is beautiful, and secured, and fortified; and the people live safely inside of it and happily. And that's what we should work towards. It needs to be a safe learning environment; children need to feel safe when they go there. It has to be secure.

And again -- so not prisons, not security facilities; fortified, beautiful castles.

S T E V E N F O R T E: Thank you.

Thank you for having us; and I appreciate you accommodating our schedules. We do have a couple of meetings, but thank you for the invitation to come and speak to you.

So in our District, I think the number one most important thing is you have to realize, is that this is the number one top priority in the

District and in the community: keeping kids safe. They can't learn if they're not safe.

And it's not something we just do, like, because there's a shooting. This is something that we're always doing, always talking about. We have meetings and discussions about this all year long. It's not a knee-jerk reaction; it's just part of what we are -- is trying to keep our kids as safe as possible.

And we always have to fight these two things -- these are two quotes I'd like to share with everybody. One thing is, "It won't happen here." We hear that; and when people say that to me, I almost feel like they don't have any idea what they're reading, because if it can happen in a nice little part of Connecticut, it can definitely happen in Denville.

And the other thing that comes up a lot, which is important, is that it can be overwhelming. If you look at all the things you need to do to get from point *A* to point *B*, and all the costs associated with it, it can be overwhelming. And what we've also tried to fight is this other quote, which is, "If you can't do everything, don't do anything," meaning, if we can't get from point *A* to point *B* quickly, don't bother with it at all. And that's dangerous-type speech.

These are things that we've been picking away at, year on year; small amounts of money of our budget. If you look at the amount of money that goes towards fire prevention and safety in a school-- I asked our architect just to give me a roundabout idea. He said between 10 and 15 percent of a cost of building a new school would be in fire prevention and detection. That's a lot of money. We're only talking about one-quarter of

1 percent of our budget going towards the security of the schools, and the students, and staff.

We made this wheel (indicates). I like the wheel idea, because not one thing is more important than the other; they're all important. And there's not really an order to it, there are all these little pieces here.

So the first thing we said -- the first one is it has to be the top priority. If kids aren't safe, if staff don't feel safe, the learning process is going to suffer. I know, sitting as an educator, as a Superintendent, you probably think that should be math or reading. My thing is, you can't learn math or reading if you're not safe and secure. So you need to be safe and secure first. And in our District, everybody knows that that's our feelings. It's very important.

The behavioral health -- trying to prevent these things before they happen; having personnel involved; sending kids out for screenings; not second-guessing your staff. It's important that they have the trust that they know that you will back them up; because, you know, when you are progressive in this field, maybe you make a mistake and send a kid for a threat assessment when it really wasn't necessary. But you can't be one of those people second-guessing them, because you never really know what's going on in that child's life.

And it's not like we want to keep students out of school. We want to have programs for them to come back; but they have to come back in a safe manner. They can't just be thrown back into school after they have an event, because you don't really know what's going on in their house.

Student and staff behavior and trust; that's another one. What does that mean, though? That has to do with the students and staff buying into what you're doing. Not just about how they act; but say, not propping open a door. It's very easy, right? These school buildings we're talking about -- one of our elementary schools is made for 800 students; there are about 40 entrances and exits. You can imagine that some of them are kind of far from the parking lot. So if you go out one of them, but your room is on the other side, it might be easy to put a rock there.

We don't do that. It's very important that everybody buys in and realizes that this is important. You have to keep doors locked. One of the things that Chief and I spoke about several times was -- it seems so silly, but here you are putting police officers in schools, but you're not even locking your doors. There are certain things you can do immediately, like lock your door. I see there's -- these are all well-intentioned things; I'm not making fun of anything in any way. But we saw something about this new invention that locks the doors with this thing that goes under the door; it's about \$100 per unit. But I mean, all of our doors have a lock on them, and they all lock. We just need to have a way to make sure that they stay locked.

So I think some silly things like -- the most basic thing is lock your doors; make sure they're locked. Make sure people know that if a visitor or a guest comes to one of our facilities, every time, no matter who it is -- and I've witnessed them say it to the Chief too, and to me -- "Who are you and why are you here?" If I come in, and I go back out, and I buzz in again, "Who are you and why are you here?" If I do that five times, they're

going to ask me five times, "Who are you and why are you here?" These are the kinds of behaviors that we want to really install in our people.

Our facilities are important; our technology -- these things -- there are ways to use some technology. We have a great communication system that goes to everyone's phone. It's called *Share911*. It's a brand, but there are other ones out there.

The big thing, really, is counting it as the number one priority and really working hard with the two groups, making sure that there's no bravado, there's no macho. You know, "This is my thing; who are you to tell me this?" You have to get past all that, because if you're still doing that, you're going to be just doing knee-jerk reactions and only get involved in school security and safety when something happens, not all the time, every time.

And I think what the Chief said -- we talk about this all the time -- it doesn't have to be the Superintendent and Chief. In our case, it works; like we said. But wow, if you're not having some kind of communication with the two entities, on a constant basis, about keeping this as the most important thing, obviously that's something -- that's low-hanging fruit that you can work on and improve.

CHIEF WAGNER: I just want to -- one or two more things before we finish.

From a preparedness standpoint, some of the other witnesses mentioned earlier about teaching everyone. I want to talk briefly about *run-hide-fight*. We use an acronym called *ALICE*; it's a training program. But most importantly, the word really is *options*. I was in training class in Bergen County last week where an instructor said, specifically, "Don't ever

do this." I don't think we should ever use the word *don't* or *ever*. It's about providing options, right? If you were in this room and a violent encounter happens, you need to have -- I don't want you to just sit in the corner and hide, right? That's not a good option, right? I want you to get out of here. But then there are other scenarios where I don't want you to get out of the room. If the person -- the bad guy/bad girl/person/suspect is outside the door, then I'd prefer that you stay here, right? And that option might mean physically fighting; that may be an option. But again, you should be able to provide options to people.

And so we teach everyone, right? The police officers, staff, school bus drivers, custodians; substitute teachers, before they teach the first day, get a briefing; students. And then during the year, the school year, during the drills, the students are told options that they can prepare. And then, annually, we do a school lockdown or active shooter-type drill annually at one of our schools with our Police Department and contiguous Police Departments.

I guess two of my-- We have these four quotes we like to say.

"There's no magic pill for school violence." I don't think anyone will come before you at these hearings and give you one thing that you need to do. There are a number of very important things that you *have* to do, and then a whole lot of extra things that I think you should consider, right? If your constituents in your districts -- if the front door to your school is not locked, it needs to be locked tomorrow and forever. And if your teachers are in a classroom and their classroom door is not locked all day long, and when an event happens they have to go in their hallway and find a key and -- it's too late, right? That has to be done. And then you

can talk about cameras, and you can talk about communications devices, and that.

And then -- so that you don't drill yourself into the mud and not be able to get out, try to focus on the probable, not the possible. Anything is possible. Well, what if, what if, what if? And then you may find in your district people say, "Well, you know, we just can't plan for any of this." Think of the probable; what do you *know* might happen, and work on that.

So I applaud you for looking at this. Our kids in our schools are the most important people who I have to protect in the Township of Denville. And we have to get it right every single day.

So I thank you for the opportunity.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Questions?

Assemblywoman Schepisi has a question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Thank you very much for coming today. And Share911 -- it's a great technology. I went to high school with the inventor of it. So I know him very well.

With respect to one of the things that I haven't heard anybody really talk about, is how we monitor the child who was suspended, expelled, or transferred because of behavioral issues; and how do we do that? Because it seems like a lot of the school shootings -- there was that element in common with people. There were all the warning signs, and oftentimes problematic behavior.

Is there a mechanism in place for what we do if they are no longer within the school to keep track of somebody who may be a threat?

MR. FORTE: If they're on our rolls, still -- meaning, they're not attending, but they're attending somewhere else but we're still responsible for them -- we have mechanisms in place to monitor them. If they have been removed from our schools-- Now, we're a K-8 District, so that's very rare. It would be normally shifted to some type of a different type of a setting, and then we do have a system of monitoring that.

But if the person was totally removed from the rolls -- like the Parkland shooter -- in my District, as a School District, I don't have a mechanism in place to monitor that, especially since we probably wouldn't know who that child is because he would be out into the regional district. So that's an interesting thing; there probably needs to be some way to monitor a student in that case. And I know the police are involved in some of that too.

CHIEF WAGNER: And that may be something that you see roll out of this RSVP project that we're working on in Morris County. That's one of the concerns we have.

We had a student from another county go to a Morris County school. And the day after Parkland, a teacher happened to ask, like, "Do any of you know any information about somebody who you might be concerned about?" And they mentioned this one student. But no one knew about it; they had to go to the previous district.

So we're going to try to work on a plan to share that as the person moves about. Once they leave school and they just become a moving-around member of society, it gets very difficult.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Assemblyman Schaer.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Chairwoman, I had the great pleasure and honor to join with you, and Assemblywoman Schepisi, and a number of other legislators on a fact-finding trip to the state of Israel. With all of the issues that Israel faces -- and we all read about it on the front page of the newspapers constantly -- to the best of my knowledge, there have been no problems in Israel in the schools, in similarity to what we've been experiencing in this country.

I'm curious if there is any comment that you would have to that.

MR. FORTE: So my understanding is that, in Israel, for instance -- I've heard this; I've not visited, but I would love to from a perspective of safety and security -- that at one point there was a horrible incident where someone made it onto a school bus and may have harmed children on a school bus. And now, on the school buses in Israel, I understand there is an armed guard that rides on every school bus to school.

So I think when a horrible event happens-- We're here today because of a horrible event in Florida; but we should have been here five years ago after the horrible event in Sandy Hook. But we heard it, and we started to talk about it, and we forgot about it. And I think you probably look out today and probably see less people here than your previous meeting, and probably less people than the meeting before that, because we're beginning to forget.

One event is going to happen in this country, and we're never going to forget again. And we're going to harden everything.

The balance becomes-- You know, in the Township of Denville, are we prepared for metal detectors, and searching every student before they go into the school, and an armed guard on every school bus? And how are we going to pay for it, right? There's no secret that there's a shortage of funds to be able to afford these things.

But there's no doubt that in Israel -- from, I believe it's El Al Airlines -- that they do a better job of securing their assets at the airport and on their airplanes than we may do in the United States. But that may also run into a larger constitutional question, I think, as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: Madam Chairwoman, with your permission, just another question, briefly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: We've all heard comments by the President, in terms of teachers being armed in our schools as one way to prevent the tragedies that have occurred. Would you concur with that?

CHIEF WAGNER: So for me, personally, no. And I've gone on record publicly as saying that.

Police officers are really good at the job that we do. And the amount of training that goes into a decision to rapidly escalate through our use of force continuum -- to go from a verbal command to pulling a trigger on a firearm when deadly force is necessary -- the amount of fire power that you have to have going on is fantastic.

I think, personally, teachers should teach and police officers, or retired police officers, or people with that type of training should conduct training in schools. And politically, I may be lambasted for that tomorrow morning; but my position is that I don't see a reason to start putting guns

in the hands of teachers in schools. I don't personally feel that that's appropriate.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: Neither do I.

Thank you, Madam Chair,

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

MR. FORTE: If you don't mind, just one second on that.

I wouldn't say for our District I would be in favor of it. I wouldn't rule it out for everywhere in the country; I think there are differences around the country.

But I wouldn't--

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: We were elected by New Jersey.

MR. FORTE: Right, right.

ASSEMBLYMAN SCHAER: --not Alabama. (laughter)

MR. FORTE: I wouldn't (*sic*) also say that there's a chance where you may consider it, depending on the person. Maybe not a teacher; maybe you have a Director of Buildings and Grounds who is a former police officer, or something along those lines; maybe, you know. But it's not something I would want to see -- is teachers with guns in classrooms.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, gentlemen, very much.

MR. FORTE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We have Alexis -- I apologize -- Karteron, from Rutgers Constitutional Rights Clinic; and we're going to bring up Dr. Michael Greene, who is the Senior Fellow at the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers-Network.

Alexis and Dr. Greene, if you could summarize, okay? -- obviously, not read. We appreciate if you have any testimony to share with us; but summarize. If you've heard something that we've already heard, skip over it and enlighten us about your knowledge that you wanted to impart upon us.

We thank you very much for coming.

ALEXIS KARTERON, Esq.: Good afternoon.

Thank you for having me, Chair Ruiz and Chair Lampitt.

My name is Alexis Karteron; I'm the Director of the Constitutional Rights Clinic at Rutgers Law School. I'm an Assistant Professor of Law there.

And from what I've heard of the testimony so far, my remarks this afternoon actually, probably, are going to go in a little bit of a different direction than what we've been hearing.

The focus so far seems to have been, understandably, on what we can do to maintain the safety of students in light of horrible events, like the shooting in Parkland; and the kind of physical security measures we might be able to take to protect our children in schools.

I want to talk a little bit about potential unintended consequences with some security measures that we've seen the Federal government enact, State governments, and school districts around the country in response to previous tragedies like that in Parkland.

In particular, I wanted to talk about the role of law enforcement in schools, and what happens when the staff -- the law enforcement agents are -- when the number are increased in schools.

Unfortunately, what we've seen around the country is that very often when police are added to schools, often in response to tragedies like that in Parkland, what we have is students getting arrested for really minor misbehavior. So even though the staff is added with the best intentions, sometimes there are negative consequences.

Nineteen years ago we had the mass shooting at Columbine, which obviously garnered significant national attention. And the Federal government spent approximately \$800 million funding additional School Resource Officers around the country.

Before Columbine, it was pretty typical for police to arrive at school really only when called in response to emergencies. But the expansion of School Resource Officer programs has meant that it's actually become routine for School Resource Officers and other law enforcement agents to patrol school hallways, cafeterias, and school yards.

According to data collected by the U.S. Department of Education and analyzed by *Education Week*, there are 44,000 part-time and full-time onsite law enforcement officers in our schools. And we have racial disparities, unfortunately, that come along with that deployment. Black and Latino high school and middle school students are far more likely than white and Asian students to attend schools with law enforcement officers present every day.

What's really remarkable about this is there has really been no research that suggests that the presence of law enforcement officer reduces school violence. To the contrary, the available studies reveal that an increased law enforcement presence increases criminalization for minor misbehavior.

So a recent study found that the presence of School Resource Officers has increased the likelihood of students being referred for low-level offenses. And another review found a correlation between an increased law enforcement presence and reports of non-serious offenses.

And again, this is where there are racial disparities that come into play as well. Just last month there was a report released by the U.S. Government Accountability Office that confirmed that racial disparities in school discipline practices actually start in preschool, and they just continue to grow as students grow.

When it comes to arrests -- again, black and Latino children are more likely to be subjected to arrests when there are law enforcement agents in schools.

And the reason that this happens is complex. But the primary theory is that law enforcement agents tend to define misbehavior as *criminal*, when educators might not. Once officers are in the hallway, they encounter misbehavior that could be classified as *criminal* even though most of us would maybe see a tantrum, or something else, and not think, “Oh, I’m going to call the cops on this kid.”

And I wish this was just theoretical, but it’s not. There are students who have been arrested for doing things like throwing paper airplanes and releasing fart spray in class. It’s been called *assault* or *disorderly conduct*.

And, of course, the harms of unnecessary arrest are very significant. It’s traumatizing for anyone to be arrested; to be perp-walked and detained. But the pain and humiliation that accompanies that are exacerbated for young people.

I wanted to just share one recent example -- that some of you might have heard of in Collingswood -- where there was a lot of outrage a couple of years ago when the school called the police in response to a 3rd grader's allegedly racially insensitive remark at a school party. According to news reports, the school administration believed that they were required to contact the police because the Camden County Prosecutor's Office had previously instructed school staff that the agreement between the police (*sic*) and law enforcement required the school to call law enforcement whenever an incident could be classified as *criminal*. And again, when there are statutes like disorderly conduct or assault, they can be read very, very broadly -- in a way such that what I think we would all think of as *minor misbehavior* can be read as *criminal*.

And the Collingswood Memorandum of Agreement is important, because it follows the Uniform Memorandum of Agreement required by the Department of Law and Public Safety and the Department of Education.

And I wanted to talk about a few reforms I would recommend that your Committees consider when it comes to the Uniform MOA.

First, I think it's important that the role of law enforcement be defined in the MOA. There are a lot of details in the MOA about particular procedures that agents must follow, that schools must follow. But it doesn't actually clarify where the law enforcement role begins and ends. And it can do so by saying that law enforcement shouldn't be involved in routine misbehavior.

Second of all, it should clarify what kinds of tactics can be used in schools. There are really disturbing stories out there of students being

handcuffed; sometimes they are not formally arrested, they are not taken out of school, but they are handcuffed within the school, held within the school, and restrained in some way.

And I would suggest that the Uniform MOA make clear that handcuffs are inappropriate unless there's some kind of threat to physical safety.

Finally, we really don't have a very clear picture of what's going on, because there isn't a lot of data available; and there certainly isn't a lot of data that's being publicly reported about the presence of law enforcement in school or what they're doing when they're there.

So I would recommend that the Committees consider requiring school districts to collect and report data -- everyone is better off when there is transparency around these issues -- so that we know how many officers are in school, how many arrests are being made in schools, when handcuffs and other kinds of restraining devices are used, and when force is being used against students.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

Dr. Greene, I saw you nodding a lot.

M I C H A E L B . G R E E N E , Ph.D.: I did.

We have not met; we have not read each other's testimony. I agree 100 percent with what my colleague just said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: But briefing through, it seems like it is very similar.

DR. GREENE: Yes. I guess the overall message I want to convey -- and I'm not alone in this among social scientists -- we need to

soften schools, not harden schools. There are technology companies -- or maybe some technology companies represented here in the audience -- who will suggest we can do this, that, and the other thing. And we spend, literally, millions of dollars on that without one ounce of evidence that these technological innovations, including metal detectors, deter shooters from coming in; and, more importantly, they do not make schools feel safer. It increases disorder and, in some cases, results in the kind of criminalization that my colleague just talked about.

The first thing that's really needed is to assess the nature of violence and aggression in each school. There are going to be different patterns in each school; there will be different reasons why kids bully one another. That has to be assessed, and the best way to do it -- and it's not in place at this time -- is through anonymous self-report surveys or questionnaires of students and teachers, to see what they really experience, and where the problems are. And then there are numerous evidence-based programs that can be adopted to address those particular problems. There is no one program that fits all.

One important thing -- and this is one of the few areas of consensus, I think, among social scientists and school violence -- is that school climate -- and school climate includes the relationships between all members of the school, it means a sense of the relationship of students to the school itself -- school climate needs to be assessed, and that can be done in the initial overall assessment through questionnaires and surveys, and there are many out there that have been validated.

We know that specific features of school climate -- like connectedness, attachment to the school or school bonding, and fair and

consistently applied rules -- as perceived by students, is critically important. And if those aren't in place, we're going to increase the disorder and aggression within schools.

A number of people have referenced social-emotional learning; I think it's really important to emphasize that. Recently, I put together a congressional briefing in Washington. And I've gotten the site there -- it was covered by C-SPAN; you can watch it at your leisure if you wish. And we had Lauren Hogg, who is the sister of David Hogg, talk about the importance of emotional health -- that schools tend to put that on a second or third tier behind academics and behind physical health. But they all go together; to the extent that we provide effective social and emotional learning, you'll get increased engagement in academics and overall health.

A number of years ago I was the founding Executive Director of the Violence Institute of New Jersey at UMDNJ -- it still rolls off my tongue (laughter) -- and after Columbine, we had developed a warning signs pamphlet to identify students who were experiencing some emotional difficulty. Others had been developed, and they continue to be developed, and tested, and validated. It's not hard to identify, early on, kids who are in a bit of emotional trouble. They tend to be isolated; they tend to exhibit behavior patterns which they hadn't exhibited before. And that identification of warning signs -- early warning signs -- should be established in every school, and refer kids to the kind of social and psychological help that they need.

There's also something called *psychological first aid*, which is related to initial calming and response to emotional difficulties that can be taught to all people.

We have a tremendous shortage of counselors and mental health professionals in our schools. That's where the money should go; not in metal detectors, not in law enforcement -- although law enforcement does play a role -- but we need to have that kind of support.

There are procedures -- and some people have referenced this -- to conduct evidence-based risk assessment. Dewey Cornell, at the University of Virginia, has done some really spectacular work on this, and we have to-- And there are ways to distinguish -- and I have an end-note on that -- there are ways to distinguish a frivolous threat from a real threat, and how to proceed accordingly. And there's a good deal of science behind this.

Kids, who, in the aftermath of events -- like what happened at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School -- are traumatized. Even the leaders -- who you see every day, or oftentimes, on the television -- are exhibiting signs of trauma. And we have to have people who are well-trained in trauma response in the schools; and also, when a large event occurs like that, to identify, before the event occurs, those professionals in the community who can help deal with the level of trauma that occurs afterwards.

And I'm going to read the final -- these were composed in terms of seven lessons in dereference to education.

I'm going to read the last one, if you don't mind, because I think it's really critically important.

Student voice and activism is essential in making schools safer. Throughout history, young people have fueled positive change and progress at multiple levels of society. All of the major change movements, in the

United States and elsewhere, would have failed without the partnership, leadership, and energy of youth; including, but not limited to, the Civil Rights, anti-poverty, LGBTQ, anti-war, and feminist movements.

Well before the March for Our Lives, student-led groups -- such as the Philadelphia Student Union, the Advancement Project, and Youth for Justice in California -- have effectively vocalized and presented solution-based strategies to redress inequities and discrimination in their lives.

Young people -- and we oftentimes forget this -- are the experts in their lives; and to not use that knowledge is, well, stupid and wrong-headed. Furthermore, when given the opportunity and guidance, young people can serve as full partners in how we go about making our schools safer and more equitable; and they can push our legislators to do the right thing, as happened in Florida.

Moreover, a growing body of literature reveals that engagement in the issues that are most important to young people results in substantially better developmental and academic outcomes.

I'm not going to address guns today, but I would be glad to. I am fairly knowledgeable about that, and I would be glad to answer any questions with regard to that.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblyman Zwicker.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZWICKER: Thank you.

Thank you both for your testimony today.

I guess I'd like to ask you -- as you talk about the emotional, sort of, atmosphere in schools and the impact that that has, in some of your

testimony there; and also to your statement, Professor, about it's not hard to identify -- and ask both of you--

So it's much more of a practical question, which is -- we see, with these horrible tragedies now, this emotional response to want to do something to protect our children, my children, your children, everyone. And yet you say we can identify these young men. And it is -- it seems to be, almost exclusively, young men, right? What's going on, in your professional opinions, of why are we not able to stop these? You know, what is the place that we are failing, as a society, in stopping these? If we can identify people, and we can know who is at the highest risk of harming themselves or others, why aren't we doing it, as a society?

DR. GREENE: I think that's a good question.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZWICKER: It's a hard question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: I think it's the million-dollar question.

DR. GREENE: It is. And like anything else -- and anybody who is going to speak up here is going to need to acknowledge -- it's going to cost money. It's going to cost money in the investment of social workers, mental health professionals, in training our teachers to properly identify which students are most at risk.

We have to focus on making our schools what some educators have called to create, a *climate of caring*. And that can be done; it can't be done overnight, but I think our overemphasis on academics, and the exclusion or second-tiered response to the emotional health of our children, is absolutely critical.

And so we have ways to identify gaps in how to make a positive climate. And in my written testimony I've given you the five elements, or dimensions, of school climate. We know how to survey students, and teachers, and parents, to assess where the schools are weak on this; and then we have to really work together on school teams to do this.

You know, I think we get crazed. One of the -- actually, the Chief of Police -- although we have some differences -- did say we should focus on the *probable*, not the *possible*. Restaurants are 10 times more likely to have a targeted shooter kill somebody in the restaurant. We're not putting up metal detectors in every restaurant; and if you could think about your favorite restaurant, I don't think you would want one. I don't think you would want an armed waiter in the restaurant.

So I think it's feasible to assess and respond to gaps in the school climate. I think it's possible to make our schools bastions of caring among students, among teachers; teachers and Administrators -- all kinds of relationships. And I would also include the janitors and the bus drivers. We all need to be trained, and that's going to cost money.

So my plea would be reduce the amount of money you're investing in these fancy technologies, and put the money in mental health initiatives. We have the science and we have the professionals who can do this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Jasey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

That's the most positive thing I've heard in all these hearings.

Because as I'm sitting here, I have to admit that I'm thinking -- we're spending all this energy, we're looking for all this money to make our schools safe. But we're not yet at that point where we can do what Australia did and get rid of the guns, okay? And, you know, while here in New Jersey we do have great gun laws, we're surrounded by, or close to, states that don't -- neighbors, right?

School climate, mental health, social-emotional intelligence -- those are areas that I totally agree we need to focus on. Because when not just children, but the teachers and the staff, from the Principal to the janitor, feel that they are part of a community, it is much less likely that anyone will be able to disrupt that community feeling without somebody noticing and feeling safe enough to speak out on.

So I thank you for your testimony.

DR. GREENE: Yes, I just have to say one other thing.

You know, John Dewey, in the 1920s I think it was, wrote about community schools, and the school building should be the hub of the community. And we need to open up our schools so that they are places where people in the community can be educated and contribute as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Right.

DR. GREENE: And as you start to work with the community, you're absolutely right; and I couldn't have said it better -- in terms of knowing your community, both within and without, is the best way to protect our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Through the Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Sure; Assemblywoman Jasey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Just a last comment -- interestingly enough, just last week we had a hearing on community schools. And that is an area that I'm very much interested in promoting, because that's exactly right -- the community school is the hub of the community. Because every community is a little bit different; it has different needs and issues.

So thank you for that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much for your professional--

DR. GREENE: Can I say -- I'm sorry, just one final thing; and I am going to change from what I said -- that I was done with speaking -- say one thing about guns.

And that is there is a thing called -- I'm not sure I'm pronouncing this right -- the *Tiahrt Amendment* which, on the Federal level, prevents the ATF from giving information about gun tracing and ammunition tracing to researchers.

Now, we certainly need more money, as a research community, to do it. But I believe -- and I could be wrong on this, legally -- but if we could require or make available to researchers, from law enforcement, who gets this trace information -- we can start to identify and backtrack where those firearms came from, and look at it from a research perspective and then develop procedures to really reduce that kind of trafficking from happening.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: We thank you both very much for your professional opinions.

And just to make -- because some people do leave, we want to make sure that everybody understands that we're hearing testimony and we're going to be developing a package of bills throughout this testimony; and hopefully moving something before June. Because what we heard from the Denville police officer was, is that there was inaction; and we do not want to be that state that does not provide action.

And Dr. Greene, you ended about the student voice; and I am very happy that we have students here. So hopefully you'll stay for a few minutes and listen to our student voices who chose to come here today.

We have Patricia Teffenhart, who we all know. She is here with her son, Lincoln, who is a 4th grade student at Indian Hill Elementary School.

And we're going to bring up Bella Bhimani, who is from West Morris Mendham High School; and Caitlyn Dempsey, who is from Randolph High School.

I believe that there are no more other students in the audience -- are there? -- who would want to testify. (no response)

All right.

Now make sure you state your name and where you're from.

Welcome, everybody.

P A T R I C I A T E F F E N H A R T: Hi, everyone.

Thank you for having us.

You do all know me in a much different capacity. I'm the Executive Director for the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault, so I have had the opportunity to testify before you in lots of different capacities.

I'm here today purely as support for my 4th grade activist, Lincoln; and we have already sent forward his testimony.

L I N C O L N M A I K O S: My name is Lincoln; and I am just here to testify.

Good afternoon, Chairwoman, and members of the Committee.

My name is Lincoln Maikos, and I'm a 10-year-old 4th grader in Holmdel. In 8 years, I will be able to vote; but until then, I can use my voice to create change.

On March 31, 2015, the day after my 7th birthday, my elementary school received a threat of an active shooter. At the time, I didn't know this. I, like my classmates, thought this was just a really, really long drill.

We had to shelter in place for what felt like hours. Then police came in with guns, and told us to evacuate the building and take a long walk to the edge of the school property.

When we got there, eventually our teacher told us to head to the buses that were waiting outside the front of the school. Then the buses left the property and drove to a quiet place while we waited for the police to confirm the building was safe.

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

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

in our town received threats of active shooters. Each threat required us to follow lockdown procedures. Each drill took us away from valuable class time, and each drill caused at least a little bit of panic for my parents and the parents of my friends.

I know that I am lucky. We were just the victims of swatting calls. While it was disruptive and a little scary, no one was harmed. But one day the call could be real.

Now I'm older and I understand more about the world, about guns, about policy, and about my right to be safe in school.

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

Number one: I know most students my age didn't participate in any school walkouts, but I'm thankful for the older students who are speaking up to keep schools safer for everyone.

But some students are being told to walk *up*, rather than walk *out*. Walk *up* to ostracized students -- the idea that by walking up, we'll keep ourselves safe from gun violence. I agree that we should treat everyone with kindness and respect, which I do; but *not* doing so doesn't make me responsible for someone's decision to bring a gun into school. I am not responsible for the crimes committed against me. I am a kid attending school. I need adults to keep me safe.

Some people, including the President, have talked about teachers having guns. I couldn't disagree more. If the point is to get guns out of school, why hand them out to be brought inside? How am I supposed to focus on getting an education when I'm worried about who can access the teacher's gun?

This is a complicated issue; but as a child and a student, I appreciate everyone who is working hard to keep me and my friends safe in school.

Thank you for letting me join you here today. (applause)

C A I T L Y N D E M P S E Y: Good afternoon, Senator Ruiz and Assemblywoman Lampitt, and members of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees.

My name is Caitlyn Dempsey, and I am a senior at Randolph High School.

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

What I've done with this testimony is collect a number of experiences from various teachers and students who attend my school. I really want to stress that these small stories come together to encompass one large American story. As I have my own opinions regarding the issue of gun violence and gun culture in education, I feel that in order to express the true State of New Jersey, and the country as a whole, I had to show you the entire problem from multiple perspectives.

Each of these moments is real; each of them happened to normal New Jersey citizens. And as a result, I conclude that this is the individual impact of gun violence in New Jersey.

I have been part of the public education system for 12 years now; and I helped plan, as well as spoke at, March for Our Lives Morristown, the largest March for Our Lives in New Jersey.

This has been my experience.

A few weeks ago, in a dark room, as my class cowered in the corner, we were taught how to avoid getting sprayed with bullets if a shooter were to break a window. We were given tips on throwing projectiles at the perpetrator.

I was in calculus. I should have been learning derivatives and integrals.

Kids debate if they should jump out of a window and risk death or broken bones, or stay in classroom if they were accosted by a shooter. Teachers have to decide if they should throw themselves in front of students. Teachers consider what it would mean for them if they had to be trained to use firearms.

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

We are being prepared for war. Because at the base of it, that is what our society is doing. Our children, from kindergarten to high school, are battle-ready, and we should be angry about that.

This is our future. Our lives are on the line. These teachers -- the people we look up to and trust -- their lives are on the line.

I challenge you to consider how afraid we are. This is not a joke, a ploy, a means to get something done. This is a real, tangible fear that we feel every single day. We talk about it at lunch, in class, on the bus. This is not only a public health phenomenon, but a cultural phenomenon. We have perpetuated an atmosphere of fear in which the very education system that creates the future is falling apart.

At the first school shooter drill after Parkland, several students had panic attacks. The Administration made it very clear that this was a drill, but the sheer terror was still there.

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

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

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

A good friend of mine recently reminded me that we have been learning that actions speak louder than words since kindergarten. So we walked out; so we have written our Congressmen; so we planned marches.

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

Saying goodbye to my parents in the morning should not feel like the last time I could ever speak to them. Thinking of ways to escape the building at every classroom is not helping our scores, our GPAs, or our intellectual curiosity grow.

If you want to see real progress and genuinely care about the academic environment in New Jersey, please consider this. I know we have some of the strongest gun legislation in the country; and I am grateful for that, as are many students. However, the sense of security is not there due

to the events I have described: robbery of the shooting range, the proximity of Pennsylvania, the possibility of gun shows. I would urge you to consider implementing metal detector programs, or increasing the frequency of training for what to do if there were a school shooting, including Stop the Bleeding kits in New Jersey schools.

If there is any way for the New Jersey Legislature and Assembly to pressure our neighbors to consider stronger gun legislation, this would also be an incredible step towards fighting the fear culture that has been created.

I know these are short-term solutions; but until the gun show loophole and our neighboring states' legislation have been improved, I believe this to a viable option for fostering a better learning environment for New Jersey schools.

Thank you. (applause)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Caitlyn.

B E L L A B H I M A N I: Good afternoon, Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Lampitt, members of the Senate Education Committee, and members of the Assembly Education Committee.

My name is Bella Bhimani, and I'm sophomore at West Morris Mendham High School. I was the lead student organizer of the March for Our Lives Morristown, attended by 13,000 marchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to talk about school safety.

I'm here on behalf of the students who have been silenced for too long; who have been told that their voice doesn't matter because we're

too young. But as Trevor Noah said, “If kids are old enough to be shot, then they’re old enough to have an opinion about being shot,” because that is the reality.

I’m only 16. I was born after Columbine, and I’ve never known a world without school shootings. I’ve been having lockdown drills since kindergarten. Growing up, we lived with the fear every day that one day we might walk into school and never come out -- a fear that has only gotten worse; something that no student, or any person for that matter, should ever have to worry about.

When the last major school shooting happened before Parkland, in Sandy Hook, I had only just turned 11. It’s not that I didn’t care, because I was obviously upset. But I knew that as a 5th grader, I didn’t have the power to do anything. Because we live in a world where we are taught growing up that “the adults will handle it.” We expect that the President, and all of our legislators, will do their job; and when there is a problem, they will actually do something about it.

However, as we have grown up, we have realized that that is not the case. If we want change to happen, we have to make it happen ourselves.

One of my favorite Gandhi quotes is, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” And that is why I am up here today. We are the ones affected, and we are the only ones willing to fix this.

Another thing that I want to address is the preconceived notion that we are trying to take away all guns; which is not the case. Because at least once a week someone says to me “You’re violating our Second Amendment right,” or that we’re just some crazy kids trying to take away

your guns. And there are just so many things wrong with that. First of all, none of us ever said we wanted no guns. All we want is to make the world safer, which is something I think everyone can agree on -- something that we truly believe can be accomplished through stricter gun regulations.

New Jersey already has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. But on the Federal level, what we are asking for is stricter background checks, especially mental health screening; raising the age limit for purchase; and a ban on assault rifles -- weapons made for no reason other than to kill mass people, and are truly weapons of war.

However, not only do we want to ban them, but we want a buy-back program to get all assault rifles off the streets and out of the hands of people who cannot handle them. And that being said, what makes your right to own a gun outweigh our right to live?

On a local level, some of the solutions proposed are not solutions, like arming teachers -- that is not a solution. From preschool and on, one of the very first things we are taught is not to fight fire with fire. Yet now, to stop gun violence, we want more guns. Where is the logic in that? Arming teachers will not make anyone, neither student nor teacher, feel safer, and will only cause opportunities for problems.

And clear backpacks? That must be a joke. All that will do is make students feel more uncomfortable as it has now taken away their privacy.

The way to stop gun violence and school shootings is not through these useless precautionary measures, but through major changes in Federal legislation.

We may be young, but we are driven; and this is only the beginning. And we are not going to stop until we feel safe in school.

Thank you. (applause)

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Your voices are heard; we're all listening. We don't want anything to happen to our children here in New Jersey, nor throughout the country.

And many times, our legislators will tell you, that things we do here in New Jersey, other states will emulate. And that's-- Patricia is over there nodding, because she works in a field of domestic violence. And we've worked very hard on domestic violence issues, and the State of New Jersey is a state that really does protect the victims. And we are emulated by other states as well.

Senator.

SENATOR RUIZ: I just want to say thank you.

I think it can't be better said than coming from students all throughout the State of New Jersey. And when we marched for our lives on that Saturday morning, you saw pictures across every town, every community; people coming together rallying behind one cry. That's the only way we're going to effectuate change.

So I appreciate your willingness to commit to this long-term goal -- specifically for my daughter, right? Because all of you are older; and the change that you will create, and the history that you are making now, will protect her.

So thank you.

Next I want to call Dr.--

Oh, sorry; go ahead.

Assemblywoman DiMaso.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: If I may? I'm sorry.

Actually, Lincoln is not only my constituent, but he lives in my town. So ladies, thank you for your voice. It is heard, as our Chairperson said.

But Lincoln, I remember that day; and I remember all the swatting incidents that happened afterwards. And I remember the parents and how scared they were. And that is something that I don't really ever want to see again. And I hope in your lifetime, we never see it again.

And so thank you for coming here today. I would have given you a ride, had I known. (laughter)

MS. TEFFENHART: I had to pick him up early from Indian Hill. You could have just picked him right on up.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: I could have.

But congratulations, and thank you for having your voice heard. And hopefully tomorrow you'll tell your class about being here today. I took a picture of you; I'll send it to Mom, okay?

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you all very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

ALL: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Next I want to call Dr. Richard Tomko, Superintendent of Belleville Public Schools; and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jorden Schiff, of Hillsborough Township.

Again, it's getting late in the afternoon. I want to ask everyone to really be brief in their testimony, and really just hit some hot button topic items that perhaps we haven't discussed yet so that we have the opportunity to ask questions.

I know he's not signed up to speak, but I do want to shout out our Essex County Superintendent, Joe Zarra, who is in the back, diligently listening so that we can have a coordinated approach here in Essex County.

RICHARD D. TOMKO, Ph.D.: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

DR. TOMKO: Your honors, thank you so much.

Administrator rule number one is never to follow three intelligent students like that. (laughter) But I appreciate the opportunity.

SENATOR RUIZ: Just state your name and where you're from.

DR. TOMKO: I will. Richard Tomko, Belleville Public Schools.

JORDEN SCHIFF, Ed.D.: I'm Jorden Schiff, from Hillsborough Township Public Schools.

I have to say I was so impressed with what their voices-- It makes me very proud, as an educator, whenever we hear kids raise their voice and talk about something important, especially as important as student safety.

But I have to tell you, I was profoundly saddened by the fact that they felt like they have to come up and talk about some fundamental things about their own safety. And we all remember going to fire drills -- right? -- when we went to school. How many of us could actually imagine that we would now have drills where these kids are hiding in classrooms,

locking doors, talking about how they throw things at someone with an automatic rifle coming in to shoot them? That shouldn't happen.

And I'd like to take a couple things-- I'm going to go off a little bit, and then I'll turn it over to my colleague.

I was an elementary school principal when Columbine occurred. I was the Principal of Jefferson School in Westfield. It was a school of about 500 kids, K through 5. And we used to not only keep our doors unlocked, we actually propped them open. And Jefferson School is on one square block, and all of the doors were propped open.

And I remember one PTO night when I told our parents that I was going to lock the back doors so that everyone had to come to the front of the building. This is before Columbine. People were very upset with their new Principal for locking the back door.

And we had a buddy school, Berkeley Terrace School in Irvington, where we would exchange letters and do all sorts of fun things with the school. Berkeley Terrace School is in an area of high crime in Irvington; and there were armed guards at each of the levels of the three-story building. And there was a large, high fence that wrapped the parking lot over there.

We thought of school security, prior to Columbine, as how do we calibrate the response to the crime that was local to our school. So if you had high crime, you would have a lot more security. If you had low crime, you would have a lot less security.

But after Columbine, and after all of the other school shootings, now we're calibrating to the worst-case scenario. And that makes our issues very challenging. It takes a lot of resources in order to do it.

So I have two asks that I'd like the Committees to consider.

First of all, we shouldn't have to make a choice of whether we hire a police officer or hire a teacher. Those choices should not have to be made. These are new needs that we have. I ask that you make all school security costs outside of the cap. That will allow your local school boards to make the determination about whether or not they should raise the levy in order to afford additional school security; very, very important. And there is legislation right now -- there are bills that are on both sides -- of the Assembly, as well as the Senate -- that will do just that.

My second ask of you is to ensure that the definition of *school security* includes mental health supports. Investments in mental health are investments in school security. We have to broaden that. We shouldn't have to make the choice whether or not to hire a teacher or hire a police officer; we also shouldn't have to make the choice between hiring a teacher or hiring a mental health professional. Our times now require that we do both.

Thank you.

DR. TOMKO: Thank you.

First, as a father of four, I want to thank you all for the testimonies that you're hearing and the meetings that you've had. I know they are difficult questions that are asked, and you guys are charged with some tough decisions ahead. So as a father, I thank you; because there is nothing more important than making sure that my children are safe and they get home to me every night.

So thank you very much.

There was a lot talked about today by colleagues of ours, Superintendents, regarding physical plant issues, lockdown drills -- those things that we've all heard. I've been an Administrator since the mid-1990s; I've been doing lockdown drills, I think, since the late 1990s, which is when we started them. So I'm proud to say that -- if I could speak for Essex County Superintendent and our County Superintendent, Mr. Zarra -- who is here, as Senator Ruiz said -- we have strict articulation; we talk, we communicate with each other, to make sure we're up-to-date on those drills.

One of the things that I wanted to bring up today to you -- or actually, two of the things in the written testimony you'll see -- I think are important, with consideration of something that you've already passed, which is the School Safety Specialist position that each district has to have. I think it's important to note that Administrators throughout the state, who I have spoken to, and other colleagues in conversations we've had, feel that this is just another Administrator position -- albeit that is extremely important -- to make sure that we are held accountable for doing lockdown drills and having the necessary programs that we need.

However, I see this -- and other Superintendents I've spoken with -- we see this as an opportunity to articulate some of the ideas happening in other districts around the state. So I think that's something that we can do to ensure that the bill that has already been passed -- the Specialist ideal that is in -- make sure that we articulate those positions across the state.

So for example, some of the things that the Denville Chief of Police said this evening I wasn't aware of. So as we have a network of all

these districts putting these programs together, maybe it's something that we can pick from so that some of those things we can use in our districts.

And the last thing I wanted to bring up this afternoon -- and again I appreciate the time -- is something a little against the grain. I know we all talk about funding, and it's obviously important. But I don't think that funding is necessary for some of the things that we can do immediately. So in Belleville, for example, we put in something called the *Drop-In Center*; some of you may be familiar with this. Basically, it's a place -- a safe haven where students can go and speak to some of our counselors or social workers; it's an identified place somewhere -- we have it in the high school now; we're going to be implementing it in the middle school as well -- where they can talk about issues, and peer events that are going to take place or that they know of; especially with social media.

We implemented this in September 2017; and from September to January we have 1,284 student referrals to the Drop-In Center; out of that, 98 of those referrals met outside evaluations. And I can tell you that at least 10 of those dealt with possible threats to students. We are not unique in this; there are a few other districts doing this. But we are going to implement it in the middle school as well.

And this is something we did with just shifting personnel. It wasn't any additional funding; it was just smart budgeting. It's something we can do. I understand budgeting is important, and it is something that we're wrapping our hands around; but immediate things of this nature can happen.

So again, thank you for the time today. I appreciate it.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

Assemblyman Zwicker.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: I have one question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Assemblyman Zwicker.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZWICKER: Thank you.

I have a question for you, Dr. Schiff.

Dr. Schiff represents Hillsborough School District, which is in my District; and it is also of a very personal nature, when we talk about school violence, because my wife Barbara is a teacher within the Superintendent's District.

And so I agree with you that we need to consider mental health professionals when we talk about school security; and we heard some very compelling testimony about that.

I want to ask you if you could be a little more specific, though; and speak just for your District, perhaps, or however you want to answer this. Are we talking about school psychologists; are we talking -- in every building; are we talking about some other social worker? What's your professional opinion about-- What does that mean? What would you like to see, assuming the funding was there, when it comes to mental health in your District?

DR. SCHIFF: Thank you for the question.

I would hate to say that this is the right way to do it, and have one size fits all. For some districts, it may be an additional school nurse, who is working with a group of children that have a variety of additional issues, both physical as well as mental health-related. For others with a

high frequency of drug use, a SAC or additional counseling for children who are dealing with issues of addiction.

In our district, we've actually invested in a public and private partnership with a group called *Effective School Solutions* that actually has mental health professionals, psychologists who work with students one period a day -- they have a group session every single day; it's built into their schedule -- as well as one individual counseling once a week, as well as wraparound family counseling once a month.

And these are significant investments that we're making in Hillsborough. We're spending close to half a million dollars just on those mental health supports alone. And that's grades 5 through 12 that we currently have those supports.

Now, we believe that those are actually budget-neutral; because if we -- if those children needed more of a therapeutic environment, we may have had to send them to another school outside of the District. Here they are able to stay in their local school, we are able to identify them, help them, provide them with the supports, allow them to stay within their neighborhood school with their friends, avoid having them spend an hour on a bus to drive to a distant school. But that's what works in Hillsborough.

Do we need more? The answer is "absolutely." Do I have the funds to do that? Not unless I reduce teachers. This year alone I am reducing five teachers, and I'm hiring one SAC. And the increase to the average homeowners, in terms of property tax for the year, is \$9. And I'm going to cap, and I'm taking the healthcare waiver. And it is still not enough.

ASSEMBLYMAN ZWICKER: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you, gentlemen.

SENATOR RUIZ: Next, we're going to call a panel up; and Commissioner Hespe, I think you have group of people with you.

D A V I D C. H E S P E, Esq.: (off mike) Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: But this is the panel--

COMMISSIONER HESPE: (off mike) We may be smaller, but we still have our group.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay; so perhaps, maybe, you'll be the designated person to speak on behalf of the group.

David Hespe, Elizabeth Shea, and James Mottola -- Porzio Compliance Services. Did I get that right?

E L I Z A B E T H M. S H E A, Esq.: That's right.

SENATOR RUIZ: Raymond Sobieksi, Report It; Kevin Craig; and Paul-- Paul, I'm so sorry. I'm not even going to attempt your last name.

P A U L V A N H O U T E N: (off mike) Van Houten.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes, it is; Paul Van Houten.

M S. S H E A: Good evening.

I have *good afternoon* on my testimony.

So thank you, Senator Ruiz, Assemblywoman Lampitt, all the Committee members. We're going to be very, very quick.

In the interest of time, you have our written testimony.

I just want to quickly thank you, as a former disability organizer, for having this hearing in Newark. As I know, you all know,

sometimes it is very, very difficult for people to always make it to Trenton. So we always appreciate any time that Committees come up to hear testimony.

My name is Liz Shea; I'm here today with two of my colleagues, Jim Mottola and Dave Hespe. We work for Porzio Compliance Services, which is a subsidiary of Porzio, Bromberg and Newman law firm. And we came together, as a group, and came here today -- sort of at the risk of a little bit of overkill, all three of us here, but because that really underscores our message to you here today about the need for looking at these issues in an interdisciplinary way.

Too often we ask security experts to solve this problem when we need educators involved as well. Too often we err on the side of looking only at educators when we need security experts. We have both of those issues in our team at Porzio, in that Jim Mottola is a former Secret Service agent with years of relevant experience; I know many of you are familiar with Dave Hespe, the former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education. And we at Porzio believe there's a third component -- some of which has been touched on briefly here today, and I know in some of the other hearings -- and that's where I come in -- which is ensuring that all students in our schools are accounted for in safety planning, including those with very complex disabilities, medical issues, and behavioral health challenges.

I've spent the better part of my career working with individuals with developmental disabilities and other disabilities; most recently as the Assistant Commissioner of the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities.

So again, we've provided you our written testimony; but our recommendations are really three-fold, and we're going to just really quickly give you kind of the basics.

First and foremost -- I'll do mine, and then I'll turn it over -- any policies enacted, or anything you think about at all with regard to legislation on this issue, has got to take into consideration the unique needs of kids with disabilities. We spend so much time talking about it, but it ends up being an afterthought. And I think the reason for that is because it's hard. Schools need the time and the flexibility to really customize what they're going to do for the students who they serve.

Last week I was on the phone -- you have a couple of quotes in our written testimony from students who we've spoken with. But I was on the phone last week with a young woman who graduated last year from high school. She utilizes a wheelchair; she has cerebral palsy. And I asked her about this; I said, "I'm going to testify; what was your experience?" And what she said to me was, "Oh, yes, the protocol in my school," and by the way, I won't name the school, but it's an excellent school district; wonderful reputation in every way, shape, or form. She said she got a great education there.

But she said, "Because I was in wheelchair, the protocol at our school -- every time we did a drill, every single time, was to hand me a walkie-talkie, and everybody else left the school." And that's because it's hard, right?

So again, to sort of defend that school and understand, it's hard. It's not always that easy to figure out how to, kind of, manage every different disability. But how in the world can we live with ourselves if we

don't start to do something about that? Because all of our kids have to be able to get out in any kind of circumstance like that.

So I just want to, again, kind of reiterate the need to allow schools the flexibility to take into consideration every single one of those unique needs. It comes up around autism; I can give you a lot. But again, in the interest of time, I would just remind you that we're here to be a resource. If we can ever, sort of, fill in any of those gaps as you build a legislative package, we would love to.

Now I'll turn it over, real quick, to Dave.

MR. HESPE: Sure; very, very quick.

One of the things that we found when the three of us came together was that we come from different perspectives; we serve different clients. And in our conversations we understood, very quickly, that it's very difficult for our three sectors to really sit down, understand each other, put aside assumptions and mischaracterizations of what we do, and try to work together.

And many of you know, I was the Co-Chair of the School Security Task Force a few years back -- the Department of Education and Homeland Security. And one of the things that you'll read through those Task Force recommendations at that time -- there is a lot in various buckets; but there's no bridging those buckets, you know, from the hardening, to the training, to the planning. But what we're saying is -- Jim from the law enforcement area, and Liz from disabilities and mental health area -- there has to be a coordination amongst all these groups and all of your school community.

Because the single greatest factor that you're going to find in preventing school threats -- from violent attacks, to cyber security threats, to bias incidents -- is going to be the human factor. And the problem with the human factor is, we're all coming at the issue from different directions. And if you want to look at hardening, that's what you're going to look at; but you're going to miss the disability and the mental health area. Or if you're just looking, pure and simple, at it from, "How do I keep this school safe?" you're going to miss the whole community engagement issue, because it does take a community to solve our problems that we do have.

And so that was the message, really, from me in a nutshell -- is that I really think you should avoid putting these issues into various buckets and look how to cross those buckets. Because otherwise we compartmentalize safety, and that leaves gaps all over the place; and gaps will be found and used to harm our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Just a quick question.

MR. HESPE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: As the gentleman prior was talking about security outside of the cap of 2 percent, if you lumped it together with security and mental health -- and this is the two buckets you're talking about--

MR. HESPE: Well, yes; I think three buckets -- from the schools, to the community resources -- for example, mental health resources -- and law enforcement. I think if you just say, "This is a school problem, it's a school budget," you're not going to get very far. If you look at it as a community issue, and look at it as the wide-ranging resources of the

community should be brought to bear, I think you'll see a much more productive report, in terms of making a difference.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

MS. SHEA: Can I just say add to that, really--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Go ahead.

MS. SHEA: --two seconds -- which is just that, sort of, on that point again, I just want to reiterate, though, that the mental health side -- I think we're at least having that very important dialogue around. What I don't think we're doing yet is, in the event of an issue, kids across all spectrum of disability sort of require, you know, safety measures.

JAMES G. MOTTO LA: Thank you, Liz.

Yes; from my experience with the U.S. Secret Service, as many of you know, our chief responsibility was, of course, to determine threats against the President and Vice President and their families; but also to secure them in any environment that they went throughout the world.

And you know it's -- I heard a lot of the great testimony today; a lot of the gentlemen who have testified are former colleagues of mine, Anthony Ambrose included; I worked with him very closely. But I think, really, were looking for practical solutions, and that we have to provide our children with a safe school environment. It's a shared responsibility -- and I think, to echo what Dave is saying -- between parents, students, law enforcement officials, and educators.

A big part of that is going to be breaking down silos, working together; and a defense in-depth approach, if you will, where we use technologies, resources, and being proactive rather than reactive. You know, our digital and our physical worlds have kind of converged here as

one. And as the father of two teenagers, I also understand that for kids to get away from what's happening in school and their lives is very difficult. One of the things that the U.S. Secret Service was very involved with when I was with the organization was the Safe School Initiative, looking at threats and how children who had been disenfranchised, who didn't have someone to speak to -- as per the last gentleman who spoke from Hillsborough regarding the Drop-In; I think that's a terrific idea. These kids often felt that they had no one else to turn to. And because of that, they turned to violence.

I think that, you know, again, this is a multidisciplinary approach. We have to look at vulnerabilities and how to assess them, which is principal to anything. Of course, the physical security piece and the incident response plan piece are all important; but they must come together because there is no acceptable level of risk that any school or district can assume. And nothing short of 100 percent success is successful. And it's very difficult; it's an extremely complicated issue.

So thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

I'm just going to remind everyone that time is sensitive. It is going on 6:30 this evening; so even if there are things that we're not catching up on, this is just the beginning of the conversation. You can e-mail your thoughts, your questions, or your comments after this to either our offices or members of our staff.

MR. VAN HOUTEN: Paul Van Houten; Williamstown Middle School, Gloucester County.

I gave you puzzle pieces. I was an elementary school teacher for nine years; then I went to a middle school setting. They moved the 6th grades over with the middle school kids.

My first nine years teaching -- all I had to do was worry about a fire drill: count the kids, see how many kids I had when they walked out; when they came back in, make sure I had the same amount of students. Do the same thing.

Now I'm doing lockdown drills; I'm doing active shooter drills. It's become a fearful thing to do -- to go to school; not just for myself, but for the students, for fellow teachers, for parents who are fearful that they are sending their kid into harm's way.

Three major pieces of the puzzle: There are trust issues. Even going into my school now, we're not 100 percent sure that we are in a safe setting. So if I am not, as a teacher -- who's leading these students on a daily basis -- sure of my security, how can I assure my kids that I'm teaching that same level of security?

Every year, third day in the school, we have the discussion about school safety, and drills, and what their expectations are. I plead to them, and I pledge to them, that I'm willing to throw myself in front of that bullet if it's coming. They just have to trust me.

The trust -- going up the level to the Administration, and to the police, and the community -- it's disintegrating; it's going away really, really fast.

The accountability of who's doing all these things and who's watching them -- that's a fear, too, that-- Yes, they have to do a monthly report; and you sit at a board meeting, and you hear them, and you see how

many incidents of violence and weapons and things like that. But then, on the other end of the spectrum, they might not be reporting everything because it might look bad on them; then the property values go down. That's my fear that we're going in the other direction.

So nobody else has said that, so I'm putting that out there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: That's a valid point. That's a concern.

MR. VAN HOUTEN: That's a concern
Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Right; thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

R A Y M O N D S O B I E S K I: Thank you.

Raymond Sobieski, one of the co-founders of *Report It*.

I just want to take a couple of minutes and tell you what we've been doing with some schools in New Jersey, as well as some other states.

It's pretty-- From our point of view, one of the things -- and we haven't talked about it too much today -- is pretty straightforward: "If you see something, say something." The Safe School Initiative the Secret Service did talk about, after Columbine, in 30 of the 37 instances they investigated school safety, someone other than the shooter knew about it; they told somebody. The information was out there. And these kids knew it was going to be something big or bad, and some even knew when and what it might be.

We live in a society where the language of our children is digital; and we need to give them the tools to communicate digitally. So what we do is we believe that an anonymous reporting platform can

prevent-- And we've been doing this since 1999, initially with phone and web; and now we have mobile apps. And we believe that one way to really move this forward is through anonymous reporting.

Obviously, you know, everywhere you go -- if you go to Newark Airport, you go to the train station -- there's a sign, "If you see something, say something," okay? Very important. These kids know, the parents know; and we need to extend that to the community. The community knows; and there's information. If we can make a standardized, easy way for that information to flow to where it needs to go, I think it really helps move this issue forward.

So, really quick, it's a complex problem. We're in a digital world. We think that there are technologies that can be implemented very inexpensively. Our solution -- about a dollar per student per year to implement an anonymous reporting platform that's localized. The information can go to local schools, as well as to a regional. In Monmouth County, we're doing some things with Ocean Township -- where Assemblyman Houghtaling is from -- with the Monmouth County Sheriff; local law enforcement. Ocean County College is using the technology; Manchester High School.

So there are solutions out there. We think that our solution, and others like it, can really be a first big step to get kids to communicate information.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

K E V I N M. C R A I G: Good evening.

My name is Kevin Craig.

In the interest of brevity, I'm going to read my prepared testimony. I believe you all have a copy of it as well.

Thank you for taking the time to hear members of the public regarding the important issue of school security.

My name is Kevin Craig; I am a resident of Wantage, New Jersey, in Sussex County. I am also a retired New Jersey Police Chief, Director of Safety and Security at High Point Regional High School in Sussex, a member of the New Jersey School Security Task Force, and the father of four children.

Since the Parkland, Florida, school shooting, I have been inundated with calls, e-mails, conversations, and meetings related to the topic of school security. The overwhelming sentiment of these discussions is how do we make our schools safe to protect our children so that this does not happen again.

The unfortunate answer is, there is no one single measure, policy, or technology that can guarantee this. There are, however, recommended best practices that, if implemented in every school, would significantly reduce the incidents of violence and provide for the level of safety that we all seek. These recommendations have been made, time after time, by committees and task forces throughout the nation, including our state, in the aftermath of these tragic incidents.

I recall the feeling of absolute devastation and shock that I felt, along with fellow community members, five years ago after the horrific tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Similarly, I recall a flurry of activity, including calls, e-mails, conversations, and meetings with the same “What can we do?” questions.

In the immediate aftermath of Sandy Hook, like similar tragedies that preceded it, there were after-action reviews. The New Jersey SAFE Task Force, the New Jersey School Boards Association Task Force, and the legislatively created New Jersey School Security Task Force convened and was charged with making recommendations to address the issue of school safety and security.

These task forces met and deliberated for months to put forth recommendations to address these issues. These recommendations, which were arrived at after much deliberation and review by experts in law enforcement, Homeland Security, education, and mental health, touched on a wide array of issues that contribute to school violence and how to best prevent, respond to, and recover from these incidents.

The New Jersey School Security Task Force issued its final report and recommendations in July 2015, after much anticipation. These recommendations touched on many issues still being discussed after Parkland, including behavioral threat assessment, crisis communication, stationing police in schools, access control, target hardening, and cyber security, among others.

As a member of the Task Force, I was encouraged to see legislative movement on several of these recommendations in 2016 and 2017. However, I believe that the State of New Jersey needs to continue to pursue the remaining recommendations of this Task Force to ensure that we are providing the safest possible environment for our school communities.

While continued public meetings and community discussion are valuable platforms, true change will only come through action. Adequate resources also need to be allocated to enable schools to pursue

these measures, and mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure compliance.

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

It is also my hope that we, as a state, can initiate real change and set an example for the rest of the nation so that we may finally say *never again* and truly mean it.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your service to New Jersey.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

This is the last panel I'm calling up, and we're going to stick to

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I'm sorry; you had a question. I apologize.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: I would just like to ask you a question.

With the background that you have -- that you're talking about some of the history of where we are with our recommendations -- what is your feeling about the school superintendent appointing a School Administrator as the School Safety--

MR. CRAIG: I believe that the School Safety Specialist was one of the--

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: School Safety Specialist; yes.

MR. CRAIG: --recommendations in the Task Force report. However, it wasn't the intent, in my opinion, of the Task Force to have that be a School Administrator. I think there are many other officials; many school districts have retired law enforcement officers, security directors, who could better serve in that capacity. And I'm not sure what -- Newark is a good example of that. You have an Executive Director of Safety and Security who -- I'm not sure if he has a School Administrator certificate or not, but you have someone who is very well versed in school security issues. And if he doesn't have that Administrator certificate, someone else has to serve in that capacity.

So I don't believe it necessarily should be an Administrator in that position.

ASSEMBLYMAN HOUGHTALING: Okay; thank you.

Thank you, Chairwoman.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you; thank you very much.

Last panel: Shannon Cuttle, Safe Schools Action Network; Elisabeth Ginsburg -- and I think she wants to be joined with Jorden Schiff.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Actually, she had to leave; I have her testimony.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

Marian Raab, Save our Schools New Jersey; and Julie Borst, Co-Coordinator of New Jersey Community School Coalition.

And joining us, a late bit, Betty Lee Davis.

And again, Betty Lee, you're welcome to come up; you gave us quite a bit here, so we're going to be brief. (laughter)

J U L I E B O R S T: Okay; very briefly.

Good afternoon; thank you very much for being here, and doing this roadshow around the state.

I'm sorry; Julie Borst. My hat today is Co-Coordinator of the New Jersey Community Schools Coalition.

I decided to provide testimony today after being present at the last two hearings that you held; particularly what happened in Cherry Hill.

And so while you had similar recommendations and heard similar testimony in the Cherry Hill instance, there were a couple of people commenting towards the end about having had difficulty identifying resources for their own children in terms of mental health issues, particularly around anxiety and depression. And they were talking about how it all felt very siloed.

And then, in spite of the fact that they were wealthy and had access to good healthcare, and had insurance, and all those things, it was still difficult to do that.

And wearing my community school hat, I would say that that framework -- and it was nice to hear people talking about community schools today -- but school safety happens on a much broader thing than just the building itself. And a community school provides the framework in which you bring in these resources into your individual buildings. And you also heard today testimony about how these are all individual needs based on what's going on inside the school. And that is also the way a community school works as well. And one of the beautiful things about that is, you

know, you could be in a city like Newark and you could have community schools, but no two are ever going to look the same. And so you are truly working to the needs of your students in the building, and their families, and their immediate community; and you're taking advantage of those resources within the community.

So when we're talking about creating a framework in which to have these discussions with law enforcement; and bring in services for mental health; and bring in extra activities for kids for after school -- so they're not out on the street corner hanging out. So they have an opportunity to get extra help with academic subjects, if that's what they need and if that's what the stressor in their life is -- there are so many things that can happen around using your public school building as your hub for your neighborhood.

And that's it, in a nutshell.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Who's next? Anybody else?

MARIAN RAAB: I'll go next.

Thank you so much for hearing us speak.

I know the hour is late, and I will try to be brief.

My name is Marian Raab; I'm a local organizer for Save our Schools New Jersey, representing Maplewood and South Orange.

Save our Schools is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization of 34,000 parents, and other concerned state residents, who believe that all Garden State children should have access to a high-quality public education.

Since my two children started kindergarten in the Maplewood-South Orange School District, William is currently a freshman at Columbia High School and Ethan will graduate from 5th grade from the Tuscan Elementary School in June.

I come to the table with a little bit of safety experience. I served, for many years, as a parent volunteer and then the Chair of the Tuscan School Safety Committee. And while on the Committee, I met weekly with a uniformed liaison from the Maplewood Police Department to discuss school safety issues and concerns, ranging from gunmen in the school to traffic calming measures in front of the building.

And in a nutshell, the most important thing I learned in all these years, sitting in a conference room in the Maplewood Police Department, is that we have to hit this stuff before it becomes an issue. We need more guidance counselors; we need more school psychologists; we need more certified social workers in school. And my 6th grade son, when he first started -- my then-11-year-old son, in 6th grade, was in a Code Red for two hours at the Maplewood Middle School three years ago, after a kid, a 7th grader, brought a 9mm Glock, loaded with cop killer bullets. This incident didn't get a lot of publicity; but I assure you, it was a tragedy averted by a hair's breadth in Maplewood. We could have easily, easily, had an issue.

But what I would love for the community to consider is, how did it get to the point where a 7th grader, a child, thought he had to bring -- thought he needed a Glock? He put a Glock in his backpack to go to school. And what could we have done to prevent that? What conditions caused that? I don't know; I'm not a mental health professional. But I

know that mental health professionals can definitely do more; and I know we don't have a money truck pulling up in front of any of these districts, and our school districts are cash-strapped.

One of the things I really want to beg you is, please understand that one way we don't want to spend money is to arm teachers. We don't want to arm teachers. Teachers don't want to be armed, and the vast majority of New Jersey residents don't want to see teachers armed. So please don't waste money on that; please spend money on getting more counselors in the schools, getting more school psychologists, providing psychological services.

And last but not least, I think this is a very under-looked area. There is another area of the schools that I urge you to consider when it comes to improving school safety, and that's a school library. Think about school libraries; they're the biggest classroom in most buildings. They're run by certified librarians who can offer a place where all students, no matter what their race, sexuality, gender, or religion, can feel comfortable and be themselves. Certified librarians have the knowledge to put the right book in a troubled student's hands and help them realize they are not alone.

A good friend of mine, who's a New Jersey middle school librarian, told me this weekend, when I was preparing my testimony, that she spends most of her time being available in the school library and providing support, both educational and emotional, to her students.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hold this hearing and giving us the opportunity to testify.

Have a good evening.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you.

S H A N N O N C U T T L E: Hi; good evening.

My name is Shannon Cuttle, from the Safe Schools Action Network.

I come here not just to give testimony as somebody who works in the field of safe schools as a national safe schools expert; but as somebody who has worked within our schools, working on issues around not just school safety and inclusion here in the State of New Jersey, but across the country and internationally. I've had the opportunity to experience and work with students, school administrations, boards of education, and legislators across the district, across the state, across our nation, on this issue.

And one of the things that comes up most often is the fact that this is a health and wellness issue. When you talk about creating inclusive safe schools for all students and families, it is health and wellness. From the moment a student walks in that door when they're in kindergarten, all the way through 12th grade, and then continuing on through college and higher ed, it is a health and wellness issue. Because it affects them not just socially and emotionally and academically, but statistics have proven that by making sure that students feel secure, welcome, affirmed, and safe, from a very early age that their outcomes, academically and social-emotionally, lead to greater achievements in job performance, graduation rates, and also overall how they come back and then contribute back to our local communities.

One of the other issues I wanted to really, really stress today, along that, is when we talk about safe school issues, you're talking about intersectionally. As we heard a little bit a while ago, 70 percent of students who are LGBTQ reported feeling unsafe. Of those, students of color, and even more so, marginal students who have other disabilities or other social needs, are even more so at risk of feeling unsafe at school.

When we talk about this issue -- about creating building safety -- we also need to consider all the different types of families that we have in our classrooms, and how they're represented, and how they feel safe from the moment -- not when they come into the classroom and sit down -- when the student actually steps foot outside of their door, goes across the community, goes to school, and then goes back home. It's a home-school-community connection; it is all related together.

And with that in mind, I have the esteemed privilege to be the architect of the D.C. Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights which is -- D.C. is the first place in the country that had a community anti-bullying system which created a safe school system from the moment a student walked out of their front door, got on -- used public transportation or a school bus to get to school. During the school day they were covered; and after school -- where they use a park in the rec department, or they use their library system -- there are systems in place to, one, provide resources; staff are trained to make sure there were designated personnel at all of those locations that students would attend to, to make sure they could reach out for health, safety, and support models. And if any of those individuals needed to identify and bring extra support services for students who might be troubled, there is a system in place to make sure that those connections

happened. So there was coverage from the home, school -- all the community, and back, until the student got home.

That being said, that's something similar that we here in the State of New Jersey could really benefit looking into. How can we build those cross-community connections to really try to look at this issue, again, intersectionally? This is not just a partisan issue. In talking about one type of issue in regards to gun control, it is just talking about guns. We talk about bullying, it's bullying. When we talk about needs of students of color, LGBT students -- these are not all separate issues; these are all interconnected issues. They are all under creating inclusive safe schools. And this is something -- when we talk about school violence, we're talking not just gun violence, we're talking about violence that is verbal violence, bullying, harassment, intimidation, sexual harassment, street harassment, and more.

These are all interconnected. And I would really implore you to look at making sure that those connections are linked together in ways that you can utilize best practices and resources to make sure that we're looking and tackling this as a group issue.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: I'm sorry; I didn't get your name.

MS. CUTTLE: Shannon Cuttle.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: I'm sorry?

MS. CUTTLE: C-U-T-T-L-E.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DiMASO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Thank you very much.

B E T T Y L E E D A V I S , Ph.D.: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Betty, we're asking you to not necessarily read what you provided to us.

DR. DAVIS: Right; no, I'm--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: But if you could just--

DR. DAVIS: Selectively--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Betty came very prepared.

(laughter)

DR. DAVIS: That's what took me so long. It was hard writing it all.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: But if you can summarize.

DR. DAVIS: Yes.

What I would probably do is selectively pull out some parts of this, and then give you a case example to illustrate some of it.

I'm Dr. Betty Lee Davis, and I thank you for the opportunity to be here today to speak for the youth of the State of New Jersey; and call for a trauma-informed, universally safe, quality education throughout the state -- as an essential in providing school security in response to the most recent shooting in Parkland, Florida, as one in a series of school shootings that have plagued this country for over 20 years.

I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, at the Ph.D. level, with many years of experience working with children, adolescents, and their families in a variety of behavioral health settings and a range of capacities; and for the past 13 years, providing in-home behavioral health services to

children, youth, and their families through the New Jersey Department of Child and Family Behavioral Health.

During the past 11 years I have provided grief support and other services to Mothers in Charge, a violence prevention organization in the city, who have lost a loved one to violence in the City of Philadelphia -- which is where my career exposure to the effects of violence, and evolving career focus on post-traumatic stress disorder, began.

In July 2011, as a member of the Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP Branches Education Committee, I was asked by the Chair to provide testimony on trauma and education at the Pennsylvania House Education Committee Information hearings. That testimony provided the clinical underpinnings for what became, in April 2013, Pennsylvania House Resolution 191, declaring youth violence a public health epidemic and supporting the establishment of statewide trauma-informed education. It was adopted with full bi-partisan support.

Within months, the Resolution's sponsor took it to the National Conference of State Legislators -- some of you may have heard about it at that time -- and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, where it received unanimous adoption by both bodies.

In that testimony -- and that's the primary point here today -- I reconceptualized youth violence from a law enforcement problem to a medical problem -- posttraumatic stress disorder -- applied it to the community level and, in a subsequent testimony, called on the public health community to intervene, using its epidemiological approach.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Betty Lee, if you could just provide a couple of examples.

DR. DAVIS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Okay?

DR. DAVIS: So--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: Because I apologize. You traveled very far, and it appears you've got really great data. And maybe after this hearing, the legislators could set up individual meetings, or do outreach to you.

DR. DAVIS: That would be fine.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: But if you could give, maybe, one or two examples of what you'd like to highlight.

DR. DAVIS: Yes; okay.

And I did that primarily just as a way of introduction, and to introduce the focus -- my focus in securing school safety. It's on traumatized children -- coming into school, traumatized from exposure to a variety of kinds of violence; and the need to recognize that, to refer them, to screen them, and to support resilience.

An example I can give, that is particularly relevant to this hearing today -- and I'll limit the example to that -- is a 5-year-old child with whom I have worked, who was referred because of episodes, at the same time every day, of crying. And the teachers were not sure what to make of this. When I did the assessment and got the background information, I discovered that this was a child who had been removed from his mother. And I asked -- it was rather unusual that he was having these episodes at the same time every day, at 5 years old, of crying and hitting himself -- he was not aggressive towards others -- and then he would calm.

And the teachers weren't sure what brought it on, what made him better; but it was a regular occurrence.

And so when I was doing the assessment, I asked the family member, who was now in charge of his care, if she knew what time he was removed from his mother. And it was around 12:30, which was the time of day, every day, that he was going into these episodes. But only at school, not in his family; they had not observed any of these behaviors.

The family member who has his care also mentioned the vehicle in which he was taken from his mother, and how whenever he would see a vehicle like that he would go into a panic and refuse to get into it.

I asked to meet with the staff at the school; it happened to be a very supportive staff. I provided trauma-informed education to them about post-traumatic stress disorder and the effects on the brain, episodes of hyperarousal, and dissociative effects; which is what I then conceptualized was happening to this 5-year-old. He was not aware of what was bringing this on; he didn't understand it.

What I assume, from my own perspective, was happening, was something about that time of the day brought back this time that DCP&P had said he had been essentially pried from his mother.

So the school provided -- was very receptive to this trauma information. They began to remove him; they could tell just about when he was going into one of these episodes. And I had recommended that they remove him at that point and take him to somewhere he could calm, to be comforted or soothed by the teacher with whom he had a trusting relationship. And that began to quiet those episodes.

And then they told me about other times of day he started to have these episodes, and they couldn't figure out what had precipitated it. As it turns out -- and I'll say this briefly, because it's particularly relevant to the question of having police and law enforcement in the school setting -- he had said something to me about not liking to go to school; he didn't feel safe at school; and he gave me a story about police -- that had been sort of embellished, and I didn't know quite where it was coming from. Well, what I learned at the meeting was that they had policemen come in to do community education, or education with -- these are all kindergartners. And it was at hearing that, that I then began to wonder if it was something about seeing this policeman that may have precipitated these episodes at other times of the day. And I learned from the family member that when he was removed from his mother, there was a policeman there who helped to remove him. And as we then talked more about that, and I talked with the staff, the policemen were due to come back again to school; and they were then afraid of what was going to happen to him, and they didn't know what to do. So they told the policeman that this child had had a traumatic experience and to be prepared.

So the policeman then asked to see him individually. He sat down with him, had a conversation. And he asked the little 5-year-old what he thought he did. And he said, "Take kids away." And from that, the policeman then said, "There are other things that we do," and they had a conversation. By the end of the school meeting, the little boy was smiling and asked to have his picture taken with the policeman.

So I mention that example simply to say that there are ways that children come into school, with hidden trauma, things that happen in

the school that trigger it. And so while the issue of security and school safety is very complex, the area where I would also encourage you to focus significantly, and to gather up as much as you can in the way of research about trauma-informed education, is to incorporate that and to include that in whatever policy steps you take.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much; very good point.

I think that concludes today's hearing.

I want to thank Rutgers University; which I was remiss in thanking Rutgers University here in Newark for allowing us to be here. And I thank all of my colleagues for staying late in the evening; and thank everyone who came to testify.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LAMPITT: And OLS, especially; OLS and our staff. (applause) Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Great job.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And you should know that all of your testimony has been recorded and will be included in the printed transcript, and will be available online as well.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)