

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 764
(Third Reprint)

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 764 (Third Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would require all public school buildings in New Jersey to be equipped with at least one silent panic alarm directly linked to local law enforcement for use in the event of a school security emergency. It is named in honor of Alyssa Alhadeff, who was just 14 when she was killed on February 14, 2018 in the school shooting at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that claimed seventeen lives. Alyssa was a very special young person, captain of her soccer team, volunteer, and an honor student.

The tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School -- and, sadly, far too many others like it - demand meaningful action. In New Jersey, we have taken the lead, as I have worked with the legislature to pass sensible gun safety legislation that will help prevent gun violence in our State. In addition, under the leadership of Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, we have taken aggressive action to more rigorously enforce existing gun laws and prevent new threats, such as those arising from 3D-printed and "ghost" guns, to become reality.

Despite these efforts, the threat of violence in our schools remains all too real. As a father of four, I applaud the sponsors for their efforts to improve school security in light of recent school shooting tragedies. Protecting our children and ensuring they have a safe space to learn and grow is of paramount importance. In the event of a life-threatening emergency, every second counts. Equipping schools with panic alarms linked to law enforcement is a commonsense measure that will enable faster response times and more direct, effective communication between

schools and first responders. This measure has the potential to save lives and certainly will provide peace of mind for concerned parents across New Jersey who send their children to school every day expecting that they will safely return.

However, while I believe this is a worthy public safety initiative, I am concerned that the bill may not provide school districts with sufficient time and resources to satisfy this mandate. In this regard, the bill proposes to finance the costs of the required panic alarms exclusively through bonds issued by the Schools Development Authority ("SDA") under authority of the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act. Because the SDA has nearly exhausted its bonding capacity and only a minimal amount of uncommitted funding remains available for emergent construction needs, I believe the important goals of the bill will be more readily accomplished by identifying a more viable funding source.

Fortunately, a less encumbered funding mechanism will likely become available through the "Secure our Children's Future Bond Act," which I am also returning to the Legislature today with my recommendations for reconsideration. The Bond Act, if approved by the voters in the recommended manner, will set aside a portion of the anticipated proceeds of the bonds for school security system improvements. These anticipated funds will be available to, among other things, purchase and install the silent panic alarms mandated by the bill. I am therefore recommending revisions to link purchase of the panic alarms mandated under this bill to the funding that will become available to school districts upon voter approval of the Bond Act.

I am also recommending revisions to grant regulatory authority to the SDA to oversee the purchase and installation of these alarms by school districts. Costs of panic alarm systems vary significantly because of variations in school size, configuration, age, and communications system infrastructure. In order to appropriately manage State costs and maintain economies of scale, I believe we should authorize SDA to establish a streamlined program to ensure that systems are designed and installed efficiently.

Finally, my recommended changes extend the bill's effective date in order to accommodate the revised source of funding, which will require approval from the voters, to allow schools sufficient time to purchase and install the alarms.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 764 (Third Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

- Page 3, Section 3, Line 4: Delete "Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection a. of"
- Page 3, Section 3, Lines 5-8: Delete in their entirety
- Page 3, Section 3, Line 9: Delete "vocational school districts," and insert "A portion of the proceeds of bonds authorized to be issued to fund school security, upon voter approval of P.L. , c. (pending before the Legislature as Senate Bill No. 2293 with GR (4R))"
- Page 3, Line 17: Insert new section:
- "4. The New Jersey Schools Development Authority shall adopt, immediately upon filing with the Office of Administrative Law, rules and regulations pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L. 1968, c. 410 (C.52:14B-1et seq.) to establish a program to effectuate the purposes of this Act, which regulations shall be effective for a period not to exceed six months and may thereafter be amended, adopted or readopted by the

Schools Development Authority
in accordance with the
requirements of P.L.1968,
c.410."

Page 3, Section 4, Line 18:

Delete "4." and insert "5."

Page 3, Section 4, Line 19:

Delete "after enactment" and
insert "following voter
approval of P.L. , c. (pending
before the Legislature as
Senate Bill No. 2293 with GR
(4R))"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor