



DONALD E. WILLIAMS, JR.
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
SENATE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
860-240-8600
Donald.Williams@po.state.ct.us

Testimony
SB1110 AAC Security Assistance For Education
Education Committee
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I am here today because parents, school personnel, and the public – not only in my district, but across the state – are increasingly concerned that our neighborhood schools are vulnerable to a more brazen, and potentially more dangerous, type of intruder.

Recently, violent incidents have occurred in schools across the country underscoring this concern – from a small rural school house in Pennsylvania to a school outside of Denver. Thankfully none of these tragic incidents happened in one of our neighborhood schools. Nevertheless, these incidents lead us to question just how vulnerable our schools can be to unwelcome intruders. A number of parents and school officials that have spoken to me are rightly concerned that such random tragedies could have happened closer to home. And, parents and school leaders around the state have been working together to reduce security vulnerabilities at their neighborhood schools in light of these and other incidents.

What we have learned in Connecticut is that the security level in one school can be very different from the security level of another. We have also learned that many schools have sought to install costly technologies to enhance security while other schools are left comparatively less secure. Frankly, I don't think schools should be left to choose between smaller classes or more secure schools.

Our bill, SB1110 AAC Security Assistance for Education, proposes a \$15 million Security Assistance For Education or "SAFE" schools initiative that will help schools assess their security vulnerabilities, provide security infrastructure improvements, and ensure that school personnel receive appropriate training and coordination with local first-responders. To extend the reach of available funding, SAFE program funds would be distributed first to schools that have absolutely no security infrastructure in place and then to those based on existing infrastructure needs. Districts awarded grants would receive 6% to 80% of project costs based on a sliding scale determined by their district's town wealth.

Specifically, our bill would do four things. It would provide:

1. \$1 million to help districts pay for *school security assessments*;

2. \$10 million in bonding for a *security infrastructure grant* to help schools purchase and install such tools as surveillance cameras, entry door buzzer systems, scan cards, panic alarms, or other systems to improve security;
3. \$4 million to provide *security training* to school personnel on how to use new security systems, procedures to reduce vulnerabilities, better coordination with local first-responders, and for the purchase of *portable security devices* like metal detector wands and screening machines, if local school leaders determine such options are the most appropriate for their needs; and,
4. Access to school construction funds by requiring that all plans for newly constructed schools and renovations of entry ways on existing schools include security infrastructure in order to be eligible for a state reimbursement for eligible construction costs.

This proposal does not replace common sense or attentiveness by students and adults that can help prevent crises from occurring. Nor will it make our schools fortresses, secure from every potential intrusion. We should not fall prey to a false sense of security. But I do believe these four components would help provide schools the tools that could help prevent a crisis from happening and help teachers, students, and parents focus on the lessons of the day.