



Fairfield Police Department

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March 18, 2015

Chairman Coleman,
Chairman Tong
Esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee

I am writing to you to share my support of SB 1108: The Zero Tolerance Safe School Environment Act, written in part to help reduce the number of threats against schools by strengthening the penalties for those convicted of such crime.

As a Public Safety Official in the State of Connecticut for the past 27 years, and five years as Chief of the Fairfield Police Department, I understand that certain criminal violations become enhanced depending on a variety of factors. These factors can include the age of the victim, the time of day, the weapon used, and even the mental capacity of the victim. These enhanced penalties are in place to highlight the seriousness of these acts, and highlight the fact that these will not be tolerated.

These crimes with enhanced penalties are often those that provoke the most fear for our residents. Police Officers not only deal with the effects of a crime itself, we also deal with citizen's fear of crime. It is often this fear of crime that can be debilitating. In the case of crimes against children and our schools, this fear of crime affects students, parents, teachers as well as all members of a community.

Since the Sandy Hook School Shooting in 2012, this fear has engulfed many within the State of Connecticut. The state has responded by taking unprecedented steps to secure our schools and train our staff. This training and security has made our school communities more prepared than ever to react to a crisis. These steps have also gone a long way to ease the anxiety some feel while in or around our schools.

Unfortunately, there are some who seem determined to exploit the attention and steps we have all taken to secure our schools and ease the fear associated with these attacks. This exploitation has come in the form of threats. Threats of bombs in schools, threats to bring a gun to school, and threats via phone, letter and social media. Because of the hypervigilance of our school communities these threats activate security plans, notifications and responses. This activation causes fear, anxiety and disruption that often lasts long after it is determined to be a threat and not an actual event.

Not only do these threats cause fear and disruption, they can also have a great effect on the long term response should one of these events actually be real. We cannot allow these threats to continue as they

will make it more difficult for responders and teachers to discern what a real event is and what is a threat. Over time this doubt in their minds (a false alarm), will slow their ability to react appropriately and identify a true emergency when it appears.

I urge all of you to support this act and send a strong message that these threats and collateral disruption will not be tolerated.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GMM', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Gary M MacNamara
Chief of Police