

Testimony for Brian Levesque
President
Connecticut Association of School Personnel Administrators
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Good morning! My name is Brian Levesque and I am the Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Montville and I also serve as the President of the Connecticut Association of School Personnel Administrators. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to come speak to you about school safety and security. This is an issue that all school personnel take very seriously each and every day in our schools.

I would first like to tell you about what we do in schools that is already working. School districts have had safety committees and plans for many years. The safety committee in Montville has met regularly for many years to discuss safety and security. Our committee consists of school personnel, members of the fire and police and also community members. These committees have done a great job of developing safety plans within our schools for many years. Additionally, every year we have multiple practice fire and lock down drills in our schools. As a result, the procedures and expectation for these situations have been very clear for students and staff. I am confident that in an emergency, our staff would have a great response.

The biggest dilemma we all face in our districts, is how to strike a balance between having our schools be welcoming community buildings, but at the same time be a safe and secure place for all students and staff. I ask that as you consider any legislation in this area that it not focus on additional reports or drills. I believe we have all developed well written plans, and have done a great job of practicing the procedures in these plans. What we need in our school districts is funding for school safety personnel and security equipment to make sure all of our building are locked and secure each day.

One of the programs I am in full support of is the presence of school resource officers. I have firsthand experience working in school buildings that have had a School Resource Officer, and feel it is necessary for all schools to have someone working in this capacity. The SRO provides a presence of security in our buildings, but also works to build relationships with students and staff. In my experience, these relationships have been responsible for creating an environment that allows people to share information in a more proactive manner.

I also believe our schools need to be made secure and locked to the public during the school day. This means our schools all need to have a system that allows doors to be locked and allows visitors access through a buzzer type system. The buzzer system allows for a secure access to the building for any guest or visitors during the day. For many districts this requires significant funding.

Another area that I feel is important to focus on is in the area of services for those at risk. Schools do a tremendous job of identifying students who are at-risk. It can be very frustrating when referring a student in need and there is no support for them. There is a real lack of services and community resources for adolescents in need of mental health services. We have done a grave injustice to these kids that are in need.

I ask you to please consider the financial impacts of any legislation that is made. Districts have been asked to do more with less for many years. To support real change in the area of school safety it needs to be done with the support of funding. Adding more mandates to our system without funding would only do more harm. Additionally, any legislation that is made needs to be flexible enough to allow for the uniqueness of each school districts needs and designs.

I have been a school administrator for more than 10 years and each day in my role as administrator my first concern is always the safety of all students and staff. I am asking you to consider the financial impact on our districts and what is already being asked of us. Please provide legislation that will allow us to increase the security of our buildings. We do not need more reports or plans; we need funding to support these programs that will greatly benefit our schools.