



## MICHIGAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Speaker Wentworth,

Thank you for appointing us to lead the task force on school safety. We've had many productive meetings and discussions over the last three months. Our goal in this letter is to provide you with a report on our progress so far while we continue to collect and work on the many ideas that have been put forward.

Our work here isn't done yet. We are continuing to thoughtfully flesh out many of the recommendations and bill ideas in greater detail. However, we are at a point where we have reached a high-level consensus on several topics.

### Background, summary of meetings, and ongoing discussions:

This taskforce is by no means starting from scratch when it comes to improving school safety in Michigan. It is important to recognize the tremendous amount of work that has already been done in this policy area, particularly over the past ten years. Good progress has been made in our state and throughout the country. With this in mind, the task force started its work by meeting with experienced groups and individuals who have already worked in this policy space.

We met as a group with many different people with different areas of expertise. Meetings have included conversations with and presentations from the Michigan State Police (MSP), MSP Office of School Safety, Okay2Say, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Association of School Psychologists, Community Mental Health Association of Michigan, Oxford Public Schools, Safe Schools for Alex, SIGMA Threat Management, Michigan Sheriffs Association, Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, and groups representing school social workers and counselors. In addition to these meetings, individual members of our task force have received input from additional groups and professionals from their local communities and throughout the state. We also created a successful web portal where anyone in Michigan can share pertinent comments, recommendations, and information.

We have also thoroughly reviewed past recommendations, like those made by the 2018 School Safety Task Force that was led by MSP. During this review, we found many previous recommendations have not yet been implemented. To remedy this, we've made fully implementing the best of those recommendations a top priority.

In addition to meetings with outside groups, the task force has met regularly amongst ourselves to have honest and frank discussions about the ideas presented to us. The goal of these discussions has been to hone in on ideas where the task force believes consensus support is achievable in the Legislature. This of course means there are some areas where the group does not agree. In the final report, we will include a list of topics that were discussed and whether a consensus was reached. For this progress report, we will simply include the items where we have a broad consensus amongst task force members.

#### Potential Consensus Recommendations:

- Provide additional funding and support for School Based Health Centers. These health centers can help identify the needs of students early and thus prevent them from turning into much larger problems that contribute to school safety.
- Have a professional, independent third party conduct a security/threat assessment of all Michigan schools. This assessment will be used as an honest appraisal of what the school must improve upon from a safety and security perspective.
- Provide additional school safety grant funding specifically tailored to the completed threat assessments.
- Recommend schools keep lockdown kits on hand.
- Address jurisdictional issues for school resource officers in rural areas.
- Provide funding for camera upgrades and detection technology.
- Shorten the time it takes to remove a threat from the classroom or school.
- Improve communication between Okay2Say, local law enforcement and schools.
- Reduce barriers to entry and provide incentives for people to go into the field of school counseling.
- Include Okay2Say information on school ID cards.
- Update and refine active shooter drill requirements.
- Update and standardize floorplan maps for all schools.
- Implement and fund a statewide information sharing system.
- Statewide coordination initiative to help encourage communication, collaboration, and streamlined training across the state and among schools for mental health resources

#### Bills Already Being Drafted:

We have bills being drafted now to implement recommendations #7, 10, 11, 18, and 22 of the 2018 School Safety Task Force Report. We are acting quickly because these recommendations are already overdue. The bills will do the following:

- Update fire and active shooter drills, while also making them consistent statewide.
- Create statewide standard definitions for school safety protocols. These include but are not limited to "lock down," "shelter in place," "secure mode," "evacuation," "reverse evacuation," and "room clear."
- Building code updates to ensure modern day threats are taken into account when new schools are built.
- Require specific, consistent, and ongoing training for school resource officers, school safety and security personnel, and other school staff.
- Create and fund two new ISD level positions to focus on the two prongs of school safety: Mental Health Services and Building Security/Threat Assessment, and provide appropriate oversight, training, and recruitment tools to make those positions successful.
- Appropriate funding that implements recommendations and assists Oxford Community Schools in returning to class.

There is also a bill currently working its way through the process to further update the fire code to allow for the expanded use of door barricades.

Work still in progress:

The prosecution of the Oxford High School shooting suspect's parents is being closely watched and monitored. The task force is interested to see the outcome of the prosecution, particularly the alleged straw purchase of the firearm and the possibility of criminal negligence. The outcome of this case will help the task force make informed recommendations related to these issues.

All of the recommendations and the bills in progress require additional refinement before we can submit them as legislation or formal recommendations. This work will continue over the next month. Additionally, we are working with Chairman Albert and subcommittee chairs such as Chairman Paquette and Chairwoman Whiteford as they put together the House budget for Fiscal Year 2023. Our goal is to provide necessary funding for our school safety recommendations within the upcoming budget. Additionally, there is the potential for funding for Oxford Community Schools specifically to be included in an upcoming supplemental for FY 2022.

Conclusion:

While this is an extremely high-level overview of the task force's progress, our final report will be much more detailed and include more specifics on our recommendations and detailed information on the impetus behind the proposed legislation and appropriations. It will also include new information and perspective that is gained from further listening sessions and discussions. Our goal is to have additional legislation ready for introduction alongside the report.

For now, we want you to know what early discussions have produced and why we have already begun drafting certain legislation. We also want to share the general direction of our conversations and the breadth of expertise we have sought. We will have more to share on all of those points in the coming weeks.

Thank you for allowing us to work on this very important topic. We look forward to your feedback.

Sincerely,



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