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SCHOOL SAFETY AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS FOR ALL CHILDREN AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES:

A MATTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Testimony Before the

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee,
Authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act

at the

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Presented by

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Distinguished Advisory Committee Members and Honorable Federal Public Servants:

I'm pleased to have this opportunity to present remarks and participate in the follow-up panel discussion to help this committee formulate advice to the Secretary on Federal, state, and local programs designated to create safe and drug-free schools, and on issues related to crisis planning as they relate to Catholic schools.

I've worked in the education profession for twenty-five years, serving the schools of the Archdiocese of Washington since 2003. My role is to link Catholic schools with the guidance and resources to optimize school safety and emergency preparedness for our system of schools. My involvement with the School System Security Chiefs in Washington and nationally has made me appreciate that the external threats to school safety are real and are only likely to get more complex over time.

During the last six years, the Archdiocese of Washington has worked proactively with its Catholic schools to make essential enhancements to school safety and crisis management plans. Under the leadership of our Catholic School Superintendent, Dr. Patricia A. Weitzel-O'Neill, the Catholic schools in the Washington area have focused a great deal of time and energy on this priority. The same essential factors that influenced public schools also influenced Catholic and other non public schools' approach to rethink school safety and crisis preparedness strategies and procedures. A constellation of factors--including Columbine, 9/11, the Snipers in 2002, the Global War on Terrorism, the War in Iraq, and most recently, the potential for a Flu Pandemic--has raised school safety and emergency preparedness to a new level of consciousness in our schools.

As a parent of two young children, school safety and crisis planning has become an important part of my personal and professional life. I suspect the same is true for those of you on the advisory committee who work in this field everyday. Logic dictates that there be a heightened sensitivity to the vulnerability of **all** children and youth to crisis situations no matter where they attend school.

External Threats to Community Health and Safety Concern Non-Public Schools

The common misperception is that nonpublic or private schools don't worry about school safety, or that they don't believe it's a real concern. September 11, 2001 changed all of that by forcing us out of our isolation. The horrific school massacre in Beslan, Russia, and other school incidents closer to home in Colorado and Pennsylvania recently, all are sobering reminders of what could happen anywhere. No school or school system is "an island unto itself."

Catholic schools certainly pride themselves on the safety and security of their internal environments. As faith-based institutions, we're buttressed by committed family involvement and the community support that flows from that interest. Yet we worry about external threats to our health and safety like everyone else. We worry about the potential for a flu pandemic, the proliferation of gangs, natural disasters and another 9/11. Still, we know that with good planning and coordination, we can go a long way toward anticipating those complexities and addressing challenges more effectively.

Most Non-Public Schools Did Not Benefit from the Burst of Post-9/11 Support

After 9/11, millions of Federal dollars were added to the budgets of state, city and local governments, including public schools, albeit temporarily and far less than what the public systems actually needed. These additional funds were provided, in part, to enhance emergency preparedness and response capabilities of public institutions. The funds, as many of you may know, were used to supplement a variety of aspects to crisis management, including technical assistance, training, communication development and equipment improvements.

For the most part, though, nonpublic schools like the Catholic schools I represent were not beneficiaries of that burst of supplemental support following 9/11, at least from my perspective in the Washington area. It makes practical sense to do everything possible to ensure that nonpublic schools receive equitable and meaningful supports for school health and safety because the children in these school communities face the same vulnerabilities from crises as their public school counterparts.

Examples of Promising Public-Private School Health and Safety Practices

To be sure, the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington enjoy good relationships with the public school systems. A hallmark of our area is that nonpublic/private schools have open lines of communication with the public schools. We've been included in public school system crisis plans, planning and training exercises on a limited basis in larger counties such as Montgomery County and Prince George's County, and on a fuller scale in smaller counties such as St. Mary's County in Southern Maryland. The problem is that this is not being done uniformly, consistently or systemically.

We also work collaboratively with county, city and state governments, law enforcement and other first-responders. Two examples of promising practices can be found in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. In Montgomery County, the Children's Health Alert Network (known as CHAN) was created three years ago with federal funds to jumpstart a baseline of support across sector lines. (More information has been made available to this advisory committee through OSDFS.) CHAN creates a uniform information network capable of tracking potential public health issues by noting pupil absences, such as would be the case from a chemical or biological attack. Most of the 30 Catholic schools in Montgomery County remain active participants in CHAN after three years. Unfortunately, there has been no follow-up support to sustain and build upon this good foundation.

Prince George's County Police Department. In Prince George's County, the Catholic schools have provided school floor plans to a special law enforcement unit of the Prince George's County Police Department for use in case a SWAT team must be called in to deal with a hostage situation. This also is a promising initiative that has the potential to be connected with a more comprehensive strategy.

Maryland Task on School Safety. State education agencies have also acknowledged the need for improved safety measures and coordination for nonpublic schools with public schools and first responders. We're encouraged by the recent establishment of a Maryland Task Force on School Safety by an act of the State Legislature, and I'm committed to working with this group as a member to highlight the need for nonpublic schools to be included in state plans to protect the safety of school communities.

September 11th may have changed many things, but it did not miraculously make us all significantly more prepared for another disaster. Promising practices such as those mentioned need to be capitalized on, replicated and expanded. Acknowledging the problem is an important first step, but there's no substitute for good preparation and true collaborations. The 9/11 Commission Report spelled this out very clearly, and the new Congress and the Administration now have an historic opportunity to draw a zone of protection around the most critical resource we have—our children and the public and nonpublic school communities that educate and care for them.

Impediments to Enhancing School Safety and Emergency Preparedness

A key challenge faced by nonpublic schools is that they are not permitted to apply for or receive most Federal, state or local funds directly. Unlike public school systems and charter schools, Catholic and other nonpublic schools and their coordinating entities (such as the Archdiocese) are not designated as Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and so they must rely on local public school systems to include their nonpublic schools in developing plans public schools make and adopt.

The consequence is that nearly all efforts to enhance nonpublic schools' crisis readiness have been without the benefit of supplemental technical assistance, training and implementation support. Catholic schools have made steady progress in developing their crisis plans and procedures, yet progress aligning with safety policies and procedures implemented by the public schools has been uneven. Training made available to our Catholic schools by public school systems has been minimal, though appreciated when provided.

Another challenge that impacts Catholic schools in the area of school safety and crisis planning relates to the separate and distinct nature of the School System Security Offices and the Title IV Offices in each of the jurisdictions in which we operate. As you may know, School Security and Title IV Program Offices do not tend to coordinate budgetary and programmatic priorities, impeding a seamless approach to school safety and preparedness for nonpublic schools as well. In addition, the Title IV Program Offices have established programmatic priorities that may be good for the priorities they have identified for public school students historically, yet not reflective of emerging areas such as Flu Pandemic and Bioterrorism.

In the end, important programs such as Title IV that require nonpublic participation have not been fully implemented within the spirit of the law. This is not a criticism of anyone or any entity; it's a reality that needs to be stated and addressed.

Title IV is a Vital Support for School Safety and Crisis Planning in the United States

Although Title IV is not the only funding source to supplement school safety and crisis preparedness needs, the programs and services supported under this program provide a vital public service to school communities throughout the nation. The OSDFS has, on a relatively modest budget and with limited staff, created a national crisis management blueprint for an all-hazards-approach to school emergencies. Even Title IV-funded programs provided to public school communities invariably benefit nonpublic schools by making the larger communities safer. Our students interact with one another in many different ways. Peer mentor, suicide prevention, alcohol awareness and drug prevention, and gang awareness programs all are among the programs that are literally saving lives with these Federal funds.

Yet we can not ignore or minimize the fact that our nation is now faced with extraordinary threats to its national health, safety and security at home and abroad. All of us in education are challenged to think differently about the programs and services we provide, and the priorities we make with the limited resources under our stewardship.

Many Nonpublic Schools Seek to Use Title IV for Emergency Preparedness

At a time when the efficacy of the Title IV program is being questioned by some in Congress and the Administration, this advisory committee has an opportunity to recommend new ways of focusing Title IV funds to address current and anticipated realities that threaten the health and safety of school communities in America. For many Catholic schools, Title IV funding represents the only supplemental support for enhancing their capabilities and aligning with emerging standards of proficiency.

As this advisory committee prepares to make recommendations to the Secretary of Education, I hope that you will be mindful that public schools cannot afford not to include nonpublic schools much more deliberately and systematically. Let's face it: Children from the same families often attend a combination of public and nonpublic schools; and spouses and friends often work in both public and nonpublic school settings. Isolated and disenfranchised nonpublic school communities are a risk to everyone for they weaken the chain of protection within and across our nation's school communities.

I would like to make a few brief points and posit some facilitating questions concerning Title IV and equitable participation required under NCLB.

For the Title IV categorical, formula-based funding that flows to the LEAs through the states, equitable participation for nonpublic schools must be assured. In the absence of systematic accountability measures or consequences for noncompliance to neither the states nor the LEAs, the non-regulatory Title IX Guidance can be viewed as an optional set of recommendations that are not required. The States and jurisdictions I deal with are not accustomed to using Title IV as an emergency planning funding stream, even though it clearly can be used for that purpose. Despite the fact that LEAs generate Title IV dollars based on the number of children in both public and nonpublic schools, the LEAs in the

Washington area rarely offer the nonpublic/private schools the dollar figure or formula they use to calculate their Title IV budget for programs and services. The Archdiocese of Washington schools office and its school leadership have had to request information regarding our share of Title IV funding, a budgetary figure which is crucial to engaging in meaningful consultation with each LEA on the size and scope of services.

- Does the LEA let the nonpublic/private school know the total Title IV allocation for the jurisdiction in which they are located and/or the formula (usually the approximate per pupil allocation) that will be used as the basis for services, when they ask the nonpublic school or school system to respond in writing whether they wish to participate in Title IV?
- Does the LEA adopt a “same service” approach to Title IV, surveying public school children without offering to complete an assessment of the nonpublic schools’ needs under Title IV?

For the Title IV Discretionary Grant Program for Emergency Preparedness, equitable participation for nonpublic schools must be assured. Despite deliberate efforts by the OSDFS to have reviewers consider nonpublic school participation in the formulation of grant applications to encourage effective implementation for the inclusion of nonpublic schools once approved, there appears to be a need for more specific indicators of what compliance looks like in the application and in the implementation of the grant. There is also a need for systematic accountability measures for compliance.

- Are we sure the applicant review team protocol for the emergency management grant application process is clear enough to facilitate meaningful inclusion of nonpublic/private schools?
- Are we certain the monitoring protocols include adequate questions relating to equitable participation of nonpublic/private schools?

There needs to be systematic tracking of those that indicate nonpublic school participation to assure that it actually happens for either the categorical or competitive grant programs. One way is through State and LEA advisory committees.

- Are Title IV services discussed as part of the nonpublic/private school advisory committee at the state level, such as exists in the District of Columbia and Maryland? If not, what guidance or encouragement can the USDOE provide to make Title IV one of the matters that is included?
- Are the LEAs encouraged to establish advisory committees for Title IV, as recommended by the OSDFS, like the successful ones we have seen for other Title programs in Maryland and elsewhere, such as the successful one that exists for Title I in Montgomery County?

I hope these questions can be explored by the advisory committee with the OSDFS. To the extent we can get this right, we will secure the safety and security of all children. We must have confidence that we will use Federal funds to move all the children to safety, not just some.

Positive Conditions for Equitable Participation and Collaboration

In the Washington metropolitan area we have good relationships across public and nonpublic schools. The Catholic school superintendents meet with the public school superintendents' regularly, leaving the lines of communication open for coordination on emergency and other matters of common concern. My membership on the Washington Council of Government's School Security Chief's Group is an extension of our collective history with the public schools in our region and the genuine kinship Catholic school leaders have with area public school leaders.

To some extent, those relationships grew out of our shared experience after 9/11 and the Snipers. Those of you from the Washington area will recall with clarity the Snipers in fall 2002, which gripped the psyche of the public and showed just how vulnerable all of our children and citizens can be. During that prolonged ordeal, local, state and Federal law enforcement officials saw no distinctions when it came to the well-being of our children and schools.

Following the Lead of Public School Delays and Closures

In the Archdiocese of Washington, we follow the lead of the jurisdictions in which our schools are located in terms of school delays and closings, precisely for the reason that the public school systems have access to more complete information from local governmental offices. It is with this operational reality in mind that I ask this advisory committee to consider the challenges and historic opportunities before us.

Government officials possess detailed information concerning real and potential threats to our safety and security. I've indicated that nonpublic schools are often overlooked when it comes to ensuring that their communities are safe from external threats. Following delays and closings of public schools is not enough to make our private school communities safer or more prepared for a major crisis or emergency.

What do we still need to do within and across all school communities in Washington and across the United States? How will we make it happen? Where will the resources come from? What should our priorities be? We need to work together to answer these questions for further action and measured progress.

School Leaders Must Make Crisis Planning Across Jurisdictions a Top Priority

Last Friday, the Washington region's top elected officials for Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia--Governor O'Malley, Mayor Fenty and Governor Kane--convened a summit on security, pledging to cooperate on homeland security issues. The focus of their stated effort will be to work toward improving such conditions across jurisdictions as communications, public preparedness, critical infrastructure protection planning, intelligence sharing and the ability to deal with chemical, biological, nuclear and explosive attacks. The National Capital Region will compete for \$411 million of the \$747 million in Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) money that is being directed to provide more support to six high-risk urban areas.

It may be time for a series of Regional School Summits on Homeland Security to prepare all schools in American to act as a seamless education community in the event of one or

more catastrophic or otherwise horrific incidents. It's time that our public and nonpublic education leaders were provided with the supports to prepare appropriately for a national or regional emergency that could threaten the stability of the education system and I dare say the economy of the region. If schools close, the Washington economy and the nation's decision-making center would be severely impacted. The same is true for other regions of the country.

Catholic School Goals and Objectives Need Federal and State Support

It's important to note that Catholic and other nonpublic schools do not expect the same level of funding support for school health and safety as that of the public schools. What is expected is that government at all levels will ensure and leverage every possible measure within their means to prepare all school communities for all types of emergencies. We need governmental assistance to establish baseline protective measures for nonpublic schools that are consistent with or complementary to those supplemental supports provided to our public school communities. And there needs to be funding to implement those measures for the greater public good.

Recently, our leadership team for the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington identified a set of goals and expectations that has become a strategic planning document for a Catholic School Safety and Emergency Management Initiative we plan to launch this year. It's based on the OSDFS Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grants Program, and we're using it as the cornerstone for consultation in the jurisdictions that govern our equitable share of Title IV funding, as well as other potential funding sources.

The purpose of this Initiative will be to formalize our school safety and emergency planning activities. The central goal is to improve and strengthen emergency plans for the Catholic Schools Office and its Archdiocesan Catholic schools, as well as provide guidance and facilitation support for the independent Catholic schools in the six jurisdictions that comprise the Archdiocese of Washington.

We are seeking to supplement our efforts to more fully develop emergency plans that align with the public schools and address: (1) Mitigation/Prevention; (2) Preparedness; (3) Response; and (4) Recovery. We want to support projects and related activities that align with those of the public school systems and which support implementation of the National Incident Management System.

The Catholic Schools of the Washington Archdiocese recognize the need to work with community partners (including public school systems, law enforcement, Federal and local government, public safety, public health, and mental health officials, among others) to enhance their emergency plans. To achieve this objective, technical assistance and training is needed for central office and school staff and students, as well as an enhanced plan for communicating emergency response policies and procedures to parents.

Of immediate concern is the need for Federal support to develop a written central office and school-based planning component to prepare for a possible infectious disease outbreak, such as an influenza pandemic, anthrax attack or other biological incident with

the potential for mass illnesses and casualties. We are turning to Title IV as one important means to supplement and leverage our efforts. We're committed to moving on our plans, yet we know that the Title funding supports that we are entitled to receive are a critical means for bolstering our efforts to enhance school safety and emergency preparedness.

We welcome USDOE, USDHS, USHHS or other program funding opportunities based on best practices, national standards and data-driven decision making. We want to focus on Global Pandemic and other catastrophic incident preparation. If funded, we're prepared to work closely with federal, state and local officials to make our efforts a model for other regions of the country. This advisory committee should consider proposing to the Secretary innovative program funding to support model collaborative initiatives that includes nonpublic/private schools as equal participants in the highest risk areas of the country.

Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by thanking Secretary Spellings and this committee for the opportunity to present and be part of the panel discussion today. I would also like to acknowledge the good work and efforts of the professional OSDFS staff under Bill Modzeleski's leadership and that of Deborah Price. There is no finer or more committed staff in the Federal government or the private sector.

I hope that my remarks and participation with my colleagues in this morning's panel will be useful in making priority recommendations to the Secretary for school safety and emergency preparedness to protect all school children, as well as the staff who work everyday to keep them safe.

Thank you.

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BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE FOR MICHAEL G. CARUSO, PH.D.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Dr. Michael G. Caruso has worked in the education profession for the last twenty-five years. He has served as Asst. Superintendent for Secondary Schools and Government Relations for the Archdiocese of Washington since 2003. In this position, he represents school safety and homeland security matters to a number of internal and external groups including:

- Catholic school leaders in the six jurisdictions (District of Columbia and five Maryland counties) that comprise the Archdiocese of Washington.
- Public school system safety directors through membership on the Washington Area Council of Government's Subcommittee of School System Safety Chiefs.
- Title IV Program Officers in the six jurisdictions that comprise the Archdiocese of Washington.
- The Maryland Task Force on School Safety, a legislatively-mandated advisory group to which he was appointed by the Governor this past fall.

Dr. Caruso has served as a review panel member for the OSDFS's Emergency Response and Crisis Management Grants program, and he has participated for the last three years in a National School Security Chiefs Meeting facilitated annually by the OSDFS. Next month, he will join other education and school safety experts in a second focus group sponsored by the OSDFS to refine the Education Department's Emergency Management Training modules for use by nonpublic schools nationwide.

Dr. Caruso is also on faculty with the University of Maryland University College as an adjunct associate professor. He teaches courses in government and the social sciences. Dr. Caruso earned his Ph.D. at New York University.

About the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Washington

The Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Washington serve more than 34,000 students in 111 early learning, elementary, middle and secondary schools within six jurisdictions, including the District of Columbia, and Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties. Three quarters of these students are enrolled in 76 Archdiocesan schools, and the other students are enrolled in independent schools operated by Catholic religious orders and organizations. The geographic area for which the Archdiocese has aegis includes 2,104 square miles.

For further information on the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington, visit our website at www.adw.org.

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