

**EDUCATION & LABOR COMMITTEE**

**Congressman George Miller, Chairman**

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*Strengthening America's Middle Class*

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**Chairman Miller Statement at Committee Hearing On “Best Practices for Making College Campuses Safe”**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, for a committee hearing on “Best Practices for Making College Campuses Safe.”*

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Good morning.

Welcome to today’s hearing on “Best Practices for Making College Campuses Safe.”

Nearly a month has passed since the horrific violence at Virginia Tech – by far the worst campus attack in our nation’s history. It is extremely difficult to make sense of a tragedy like this, and unanswered questions about the events that unfolded that day will undoubtedly persist for a long time.

Virginia Governor Tim Kaine has provided tremendous leadership for the Virginia Tech community and for his state during this painful and difficult time. The work of his commission will address the ongoing questions about the tragedy on the Virginia Tech campus.

We will look to the commission’s work for guidance when it releases its recommendations.

The purpose of our hearing today is to learn from campus safety advocates and school administrators about how the Congress can help colleges and universities across the country to prevent and recover from tragedies.

On the emergency preparedness front, we are particularly interested in learning about emergency communications systems that use the latest technologies.

Many campuses use broadcast emails and text-messaging systems that have proven to be effective in alerting students and staff of emergency situations.

Communications, as we have learned, must include a way for parents or other loved ones to receive updates and information about students or staff on campus.

The overall safety and emergency preparedness plan is just one part of the equation. Detecting and preventing threats on a campus community is the other part of the equation.

Comprehensive mental health counseling and intervention services can be incorporated into daily student life on campuses, to help prevent individuals from acting on their emotions in a negative way.

As we examine the state of safety on campuses today, we must also look at some of the more common – and pervasive – threats to students: alcohol abuse and sexual assault.

According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, in 2001, more than 1,700 deaths on campuses were caused by alcohol related injuries; 97,000 students were victims of alcohol-related rape or sexual assaults; and 696,000 students were assaulted by another student who had been drinking heavily. And federal statistics show that in 2006, there were more than 2,600 rapes reported by students – a figure that still may not show us the full picture given that sexual assaults tend to have especially low reporting rates.

Nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of our children, our students, and our loved ones.

As the Virginia Tech community continues to recover and heal from last month's tragedy, the best service we can provide to the students and faculty and staff members of colleges and universities across this country is to first listen and learn. Then we must decide what additional role the federal government can play in better preparing campuses to be safe.

We look forward to the testimony by our panel of witnesses.

I now recognize the committee's Senior Republican, Mr. McKeon, for his opening remarks.

Thank you.

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