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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FEDERAL COMMISSION ON SCHOOL SAFETY

"The Ecology of Schools:
Fostering a Culture of Human Flourishing
and Developing Character"

Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Indian Treaty Room
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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 OPENING REMARKS

3 SEC. DEVOS: Good afternoon. Welcome,
4 everyone. Thank you for attending this meeting of the
5 Federal Commission on School Safety.

6 I'd like to acknowledge my fellow
7 commissioners and thank them for their commitment to
8 the important work of this commission. And we're
9 grateful to today's speakers for presenting their
10 statements and sharing their valuable insights.

11 President Trump formed this commission in the
12 wake of the terrible tragedy that occurred at Marjorie
13 Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida in
14 February this year. And as the recent shooting at
15 Santa Fe sadly underscored, these are all too frequent
16 incidents in our country.

17 Every student deserves a safe and nurturing
18 learning environment. We owe it to our students, our
19 educators, our country to give them that.

20 At President Trump's direction, the agency's
21 represented here are continuing to work with states and
22 districts to improve school safety. And Congress

1 included a number of the safety measures proposed by
2 the President in the most recent omnibus appropriations
3 bill. There of course remains much more work to be
4 done.

5 The goal is this commission is to identify
6 ways in which our mental health professionals and
7 education and law enforcement officials can more
8 effectively prevent, protect and mitigate and respond
9 to tragedies.

10 Our job is not to mandate "one size fits all"
11 policies. Instead, proven and effective policies and
12 practices should be adopted at the state and local
13 levels. They are the ones who know best the unique
14 needs of their schools and the resources of their
15 communities.

16 The commission does have an important role in
17 highlighting best practices, convening experts and
18 making recommendations.

19 Thus far, we've heard from the authors of the
20 official reports following the school shootings at
21 Columbine High School, Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook
22 Elementary, in addition to parents and students who

1 lost loved ones in these tragedies.

2 We conducted our first field visit at a school
3 district that is implementing positive behavioral
4 interventions and supports to improve the school
5 climate and we held our first public listening session
6 where members of the public could share their ideas and
7 solutions to improve safety in schools.

8 Today's meeting is focused on how
9 entertainment, media, cyberbullying and social media
10 may affect violence and student safety. We have a duo
11 of experts on each of these topics and we look forward
12 to hearing from them.

13 Since we have a tight timeline today, I ask
14 that our speakers and commissioners kindly adhere to
15 the schedule. With that, I'd like to turn it over to
16 my fellow commissioners or, in some cases, their
17 respective designees today for their opening remarks.
18 We'll begin with Attorney General Sessions.

19 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Secretary
20 DeVos. Thank you for your leadership on this whole
21 issue. And you can be sure Secretary DeVos is focused
22 on it. The President has asked her to take a lead and

1 she is doing so in a very, very strong way.

2 We look forward to the panelists. We're
3 looking for their views. The Department of Justice is
4 committed to working with the commission to study,
5 evaluate and make recommendations on how we can improve
6 schools' safety. We learn something every time we have
7 one of these meetings.

8 I think we're, on our side, the law
9 enforcement side, picking up on the idea that there are
10 too many barriers, too many silos in the system where
11 the juvenile courts keep their records secret
12 basically.

13 The medical people tend to. The school
14 resource officers do and teachers are careful about
15 releasing information that sometimes allows bullying
16 and even violence to build up without sufficient
17 knowledge out there.

18 So these issues of cyberbullying, youth
19 consumption of violent entertainment and the effects of
20 press coverage on mass shootings is important and I
21 look forward to the hearing.

22 Over the course of several years, researchers

1 from the Cyberbullying Research Center surveyed nearly
2 15,000 middle and high school students through nine
3 different studies from over 80 different schools
4 throughout the United States. About 25 percent of the
5 students surveyed told us they had been cyberbullied at
6 some point in their lifetime.

7 Of particular concern for today's discussion,
8 the research has found that cyberbullying is related to
9 low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, anger, frustration
10 and a variety of other emotional and psychological
11 problems. And interestingly, traditional bullying is
12 still more common than cyberbullying.

13 It does appear that teachers and school
14 professionals can do more. In 2015, about 5 percent of
15 students reported they had avoided at least one school
16 activity or one class or one or more places in school
17 during the previous school year because they thought
18 someone might attack or harm them. That's a
19 significant statistic.

20 More must be done to address these concerns.
21 One thing is for sure. The President is determined
22 that we take strong steps to make our schools safer.

1 We at the Department of Justice are focusing on these
2 issues.

3 Earlier this month, the Department of Justice
4 announced its first grants under the Stop School
5 Violence Act, which President Trump signed into law.
6 Under this new law, the department will provide \$50
7 million to train teachers and students to develop an
8 anonymous reporting system for threats of school
9 violence.

10 In the coming weeks, we will offer another 25
11 million (dollars) in these school safety grants. We at
12 the department are particularly focused on breaking
13 down barriers to information sharing. And we talked
14 about that, as I noted, at our previous meeting.

15 To keep students safe, we need to break down
16 the walls that exist between law enforcement, mental
17 health professionals and school officials.

18 Next Wednesday, the FBI, a component of the
19 Department of Justice, is hosting a school safety event
20 where members of federal, state and local law
21 enforcement will gather to discuss how we can best
22 protect our children from school violence.

1 The goal is to build upon the discussions we
2 began when I met with the leaders from law enforcement
3 after the Parkland shooting. I'm confident the group
4 will have valuable insights that they can share with
5 us.

6 We must not lose momentum in our efforts to
7 protect our children, to keep our schools safe. And I
8 look forward to working with the commission to do that.
9 And again, thank you, Secretary DeVos and all of you
10 for coming today to share your thoughts with us.

11 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Attorney General
12 Sessions. I'd now like to turn to Acting Deputy
13 Secretary Claire Grady of the Department of Homeland
14 Security for opening remarks.

15 MS. GRADY: Thank you. It's my pleasure to
16 join you all today. And I would like to start off by
17 thanking Secretary DeVos for hosting the commission
18 meeting today and for her leadership on this important
19 issue.

20 I truly believe in the importance of this
21 commission, not only as the acting Deputy Secretary of
22 Homeland Security, but as somebody who sends two

1 grandchildren, a stepdaughter and a sister and a
2 sister-in-law to school every day as students, teachers
3 and counselors.

4 I'm sickened that so many schools are touched
5 by violence and I'm outraged by the loss of so many
6 innocent lives. As President Trump said in his
7 earliest days in office, the government's greatest
8 responsibility is the security of its people. And I'm
9 glad to have such outstanding partners in this effort.

10 I would also like to thank those who are here
11 today to provide their perspectives on how to foster a
12 culture where children can flourish and develop
13 character in our school systems.

14 By sharing your knowledge and experiences with
15 the commission, we will better be able to identify and
16 implement effective approaches to enhancing the safety
17 and security of our nation's schools.

18 Today's meeting focuses largely on -- (off
19 mic) -- and social media's impact on the -- (off mic) -
20 - social media contributes to school violence is
21 important to understanding how best to prevent such
22 violence from occurring again.

1 To help schools operationalize the lessons
2 learned from similar research efforts -- (off mic) --
3 is developing an operational guide that will provide
4 school personnel, law enforcement and other public
5 agencies and school professionals -- (off mic) --
6 outline procedures for schools on how to create
7 multidisciplinary threat assessments, establish central
8 reporting, identify student behaviors of concern,
9 define the thresholds for law enforcement and
10 prevention and identify intervention and management
11 strategies for decreasing the risk of a targeted
12 attack.

13 The mic wasn't on? Darn it. Sorry. The U.S.
14 Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center is
15 leading the development of this guide, which is
16 expected to be available for release in July 2018.

17 The NTAC is also providing in-person training
18 and consultation on creating effective school-based
19 threat assessment programs, instituting processes and
20 procedures for identifying students who may be
21 exhibiting concerning behavior, establishing protocols
22 to assess the risk a student poses to themselves or

1 others and identifying intervention and management
2 strategies to mitigate the risk of a student engaging
3 in harms to the school community.

4 Throughout this guide and related services,
5 the NTAC is available to help leverage the nearly 20
6 years of experience as a national and international
7 leader for research, training, consultation and
8 information sharing on threat assessment and the
9 prevention of various forms of targeted violence to
10 help make our schools safer for our students and
11 teachers.

12 I look forward to the discussion that we will
13 have today on this important issue.

14 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Deputy Secretary
15 Grady. And I'd now like to turn to Deputy Secretary
16 Eric Hargan of the Department of Health and Human
17 Services. Welcome.

18 MR. HARGAN: Thank you, Secretary DeVos, and
19 thank you to all of the speakers who have come here
20 today to share with us your knowledge and expertise
21 about these important matters. Secretary Azar wishes
22 that he could be here today with you. He is in Texas

1 today with the First Lady, as you may have seen.

2 Your remarks today will help shape the
3 commission's report, which will provide meaningful and
4 actionable recommendations on ways to keep our students
5 and teachers safe. This commission, as we all know,
6 has an important job to do and we at HHS are all taking
7 our role on the commission very seriously.

8 I particularly am taking it seriously since I
9 have family and friends in the Paducah Elementary
10 School System when that shooting took place so many
11 years ago. And so, I take this all very personally.
12 So leadership at HHS cares about these issues very
13 much.

14 I am interested in hearing from you today to
15 better understand the impacts of cyberbullying and
16 social media, youth consumption of violent
17 entertainment and the effects of press coverage on mass
18 shootings on our children and youth.

19 I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts
20 on ways to prevent school tragedies and approaches that
21 will positively impact school climate and school
22 safety. So again, thank you all for being here today.

1 I look forward to hearing from you. Secretary DeVos?

2 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Deputy Secretary
3 Hargan. And here now is how we will proceed. We will
4 first hear from our speakers on panel one, who will
5 speak on the issue of cyberbullying and social media.
6 Then there will be a short question-and-answer session
7 between the commissioners and the panelists.

8 Then panel two will present their remarks on
9 youth consumption of violent entertainment, followed by
10 a Q&A period. Then finally, panel three will speak to
11 the effects of press coverage on mass shootings.

12 Just like with the other panels, we will
13 follow that with a brief period of questions and
14 answers. Before concluding today, the commissioners
15 and I will make brief closing remarks.

16 Each of the speakers will have approximately
17 eight minutes to speak. The light at the top of this
18 timer will turn yellow when you have a minute left. It
19 will turn red when eight minutes have elapsed.

20 I apologize in advance if I have to ask you to
21 wrap up your remarks to any of our presenters. But we
22 want to ensure everyone has time to present and we want

1 to hear from each of you.

2 So I'd like to first welcome our first panel
3 to come and take your seats here. Welcome. Our first
4 speaker is Dr. Sameer Hinduja.

5 Dr. Hinduja is a professor in the school of
6 criminology and criminal justice at Florida Atlantic
7 University and is co-director of the Cyberbullying
8 Research Center. Dr. Hinduja?

9 PANEL 1: CYBERBULLYING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

10 DR. HINDUJA: Good afternoon to each of you.
11 Along with my colleague, Dr. Justin Patchin, from the
12 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, I have worked to
13 promote the positive use of technology among students
14 through research and outreach for the last 15 years.

15 Topics we explore in our work include a number
16 of behaviors that mainly occur on social media. These
17 include sexting, sextortion, digital dating abuse,
18 digital self-harm, digital reputation issues and
19 cyberbullying, which I will focus on today.

20 While I'm proud of the papers and the books we
21 have written, I am most thankful for my time in the
22 trenches working with tens of thousands of students,

1 educators, mental health professionals, law enforcement
2 and parents each year on these topics. So many are in
3 need of research-informed guidance and I know that's
4 why we're here.

5 Attorney General Sessions, I have some updated
6 statistics for you. In our most recent study of a
7 nationally representative sample of approximately 5,700
8 middle and high school students across America, 34
9 percent say that they have been cyberbullied during
10 their lifetime.

11 In addition, 12 percent reveal that they had
12 cyberbullied others during their lifetimes. So that's
13 one-third of youth across America indicating that
14 they've been bullied online and about one out of 10
15 stating they've bullied others online. We also know
16 that more than 80 percent of those being cyberbullied
17 are also being bullied at school, indicating a strong
18 overlap.

19 As you mentioned, research has tied experience
20 with bullying and cyberbullying to low self-esteem,
21 depression, anxiety, family problems, academic
22 struggles, delinquency, school violence and suicidal

1 thoughts and attempts.

2 Most important to me is how negative
3 experiences online unnecessarily compromise the healthy
4 flourishing of our youth at school, where they spend
5 over 6.5 hours each day.

6 According to our research, over 60 percent of
7 the students who experienced cyberbullying stated it
8 deeply affected their ability to learn and feel safe at
9 school. Furthermore, 10 percent of students we
10 surveyed said they skipped school at least once in the
11 previous year because of cyberbullying. This cannot be
12 happening.

13 Even though states work hard to get meaningful
14 guidance into the hands of each school district,
15 schools across each state are often left to figure out
16 from trial and error what sort of strategies they
17 should put into place. We go into schools all the time
18 and many administrators and counselors simply are not
19 sure what to do.

20 In terms of programming, they're trying a
21 variety of strategies, from random assembly speakers to
22 random documentaries and videos to random curricula

1 they hear about to random programs that capitalize on a
2 quick, emotional reaction.

3 However, these don't seem to affect meaningful
4 change that lasts more than a few weeks. At best,
5 these approaches are inefficient. And at worst,
6 they're doing more damage than good, as kids will tune
7 out, believe we're oblivious and feel that nothing is
8 going to get better.

9 Now, more than ever, our efforts must be
10 relevant, research-based, systemic and comprehensive
11 instead of ad hoc and off the cuff.

12 Allow me to share a few key recommendations.
13 Please note none of these are app-specific are cyber-
14 specific because cyberbullying is not so much a
15 technological problem, as some would believe. It is
16 more of a social problem manifesting where we all
17 increasingly live our lives, online.

18 First, school climate efforts. Positive
19 school climates are marked by shared feelings of
20 connectedness, belongingness, emotional warmth, peer
21 respect, morale, safety and school spirit. In one of
22 our recent studies, we found that in schools where

1 students perceived a more positive school climate,
2 there was significantly less cyberbullying as well as
3 less school bullying, violence and other problem
4 behaviors.

5 This makes sense because most cyberbullying
6 among youth occurs between individuals who know each
7 other at school, not between strangers who only connect
8 online.

9 Specific school programming towards this end
10 can help reduce the frequency of cyberbullying as well
11 as contribute to increased student attendance,
12 participation, higher student achievement and less
13 disciplinary issues.

14 Second, social norming. Social norming has to
15 do with modifying the environment or culture within a
16 school so that appropriate behaviors are not only
17 encouraged, but widely presented to be the norm.

18 That is, schools must work to create a setting
19 in which the responsible use of social media is just
20 what we do around here and just how it is amongst our
21 students. This can occur by strategically highlighting
22 the majority of youth who do use social media in

1 positive, constructive ways.

2 If I told you that 12 percent of kids
3 cyberbully others, you wouldn't focus on spreading that
4 fact around your student body.

5 Rather, you would reframe and re-conceptualize
6 that statistic and create cool and relevant messaging
7 strategies emphasizing that the vast majority of
8 students, 88 percent in this example, are using social
9 media with integrity, discretion and wisdom. By
10 defining what is normal and typical among the student
11 body, it helps induce the remainder to get on board.

12 Third, student-led initiatives. Adults are
13 doing a lot of good work. But it's repeatedly evident
14 that students are the most powerful catalyst for change
15 on their campuses and in their peer groups. They're
16 the real experts at what it means to be a kid these
17 days.

18 We don't often tap into their knowledge and
19 experiences to help convey the right messages and set
20 the right standards. The last thing we want is to
21 waste time, effort and resources on adult-led
22 initiatives that students know would never gain any

1 traction.

2 Since teens are fully immersed in all things
3 technological and social, it is crucial to enlist their
4 assistance in promoting and celebrating digital
5 citizenship, setting the tone and tying it into the
6 school's identity and determining how to get the entire
7 student body to help make kindness go viral.

8 Fourth, resilience. Generally speaking,
9 resilience, is the capacity to bounce back and
10 successfully adapt in the face of adversity. Some
11 interesting findings on this topic came out of one of
12 our recent papers.

13 Of those students who were cyberbullied, those
14 with the highest levels of resilience were least likely
15 to be phased by it in terms of their ability to learn
16 and their feelings of safety at school.

17 In addition, students with high resilience who
18 were cyberbullied were more likely to utilize pro-
19 social responses, reporting it to the school, to the
20 site or the app on which it occurred, changing their
21 screen name, blocking the harasser, logging out. They
22 believed in themselves and their ability to do

1 something about the problem.

2 Those with the lowest levels of resilience
3 when cyberbullied, they did nothing. They suffered
4 silently because they didn't know that they had agency
5 and autonomy to control their online experience.

6 Finally, among those students who were
7 cyberbullied, those with higher levels of resilience
8 were less likely to be bothered overall and less likely
9 to get sad, angry, frustrated, fearful or embarrassed
10 because of it.

11 Why does this matter? Well, in the field of
12 criminology, research consistently demonstrates that
13 youth who experience these negative emotions often
14 haven't developed the positive coping skills to
15 reconcile them. And so, they end up acting out either
16 in self-harm or interpersonal harm or violence.

17 The topics I have discussed today have similar
18 implications not just for cyberbullying but for general
19 student wellbeing and school safety. Creating and
20 maintaining a positive school environment can reduce a
21 host of problems because adults have better
22 relationships with the students under their care.

1 Setting appropriate social norms can convey
2 the clear standard among the student body is that
3 everyone looks out for each other, no matter what.
4 Student-led initiatives allow youth to play an
5 enthusiastic and meaningful role in shaping the quality
6 of their school environment.

7 And as mentioned, resilience programming can
8 help students discover their own ability to be
9 overcomers and rise above the stressors that come their
10 way -- social, relational or otherwise.

11 In conclusion, I believe the federal
12 government can support these efforts by providing
13 additional personnel and funding to schools to
14 implement these recommendations with fidelity.

15 Second, scholars need funding to do more
16 evaluation research to determine how well these
17 initiatives are working and how they can be tweaked to
18 be even more successful. Third, we need better ways to
19 get these evolving best practices into the hands of
20 those who need it.

21 Fourth, we need mechanisms for accountability,
22 not just at the school level but at the state and

1 federal level. This will help ensure that adequate
2 resources are provided so that our students can thrive
3 and our communities can flourish. Thank you for your
4 time.

5 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Dr. Hinduja.
6 Appreciate your being here today.

7 DR. HINDUJA: Thank you.

8 SEC. DEVOS: Our next speaker is Dr. Paul
9 Gausman. Dr. Gausman is currently the superintendent
10 of schools for the Sioux City Community School District
11 in Sioux City, Iowa. He was named the 2014 Iowa
12 Superintendent of the Year. Welcome, Dr. Gausman.

13 DR. GAUSMAN: Thank you very much. Good
14 afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to address
15 this commission.

16 As mentioned, my name is Dr. Paul Gausman.
17 I've been called a lot of things, so Gausman is
18 certainly fine. I'm honored to be the superintendent
19 of schools for the Sioux City Community School District
20 in Sioux City, Iowa. I'm also honored to be a husband
21 and a father.

22 Our district has an enrollment of nearly

1 15,000 students. While this district is medium-sized
2 by national standards, we're the fourth largest in Iowa
3 and we have urban characteristics.

4 We're blessed to teach our student population
5 made up of about 67 percent of our students in poverty.
6 Twenty percent are English language learners and we
7 just exceeded the national average of 13 percent of our
8 population are students identified with special
9 education needs. Of that group of English language
10 learners, we have multiple home languages spoken in our
11 district.

12 I do not share any of these items of
13 demography as insurmountable challenges. As a matter
14 of fact, quite the opposite. I chose to work for this
15 organization because of my passion to serve children
16 from diverse backgrounds and in a community that
17 celebrates inclusion.

18 Sioux City is a blue collar river town,
19 bordering Nebraska and South Dakota with a metropolitan
20 statistical area of about 150,000 people. Sioux City
21 has a long history of hardworking people, railroads,
22 stockyards and food processing. And it's a regional

1 service hub for many neighboring communities.

2 Members of the Sioux City Community School
3 District and our community have worked hard to engage
4 the national discourse on school-based bullying.

5 From 2009 through 2011, we were intricately
6 involved in the creation of the documentary Bully.
7 This important work follows the lives of five students
8 who faced bullying on a daily basis and regrettably one
9 of those students was filmed in our schools, as our
10 district was the only district in the nation to give
11 these filmmakers access to create a transparent and
12 real-time view of school-based bullying.

13 Students must absolutely feel safe in order to
14 have a chance to be successful in school. And at
15 times, we all, as an entire culture, fail those
16 students on this basic need and right.

17 I have since participated in activities as a
18 bully prevention advocate and speaker, such as when the
19 film prepared -- premiered, excuse me, at the Tribeca
20 Film Festival. I was a panelist here at the White
21 House screening and I participated in a Senate field
22 hearing on this topic.

1 We, through our participation in this
2 documentary, opened the door to criticism about our
3 district and our community. But I would not change
4 that work, as the result of our participation includes
5 positive change in our organization.

6 Our participation in this documentary has
7 created some of the richest and most meaningful
8 discussion in our community about what the entirety of
9 our community must do to assist and support schools in
10 our efforts to prevent bullying.

11 Bullying is best defined as taking action to
12 attempt to harm, intimidate or coerce someone perceived
13 as vulnerable to such action. Bullying is about power
14 and control and bullying flourishes where vulnerability
15 thrives.

16 Bullying is not unique to schools. Bullying
17 occurs just about anywhere that multiple people gather
18 and now, as we've just heard, even online and in social
19 media platforms.

20 In any community, schools are mirrors of the
21 community that they serve. And if you find schools
22 that have significant instances of bullying, those

1 challenges are a reflection of that community.

2 In order to repair the challenges of bullying
3 in schools, one must look to the greater community to
4 consider the way in which we will prevent bullying.
5 This speaks to my perspective that bullying is best
6 defeated by prevention.

7 In our case, in Sioux City, our board,
8 administration, community and staff members align to
9 work toward preventing bullying before it occurs, of
10 course in addition to reacting when it does occur.

11 We have consistently said that we're not
12 unique because we have bullying in our schools. But we
13 want to become unique in Sioux City by becoming a
14 school district that has made a difference in this
15 arena.

16 Today, I would like to make remarks specific
17 to the changing nature and growing challenges of
18 cyberbullying and the use of social media in bullying
19 scenarios.

20 Bullying that takes place on cellphones and
21 other devices and through social media platforms has
22 presented those of us who lead schools with new

1 challenges that simply cannot be mitigated with
2 previous solutions.

3 We must consider new solutions specific to
4 social media and cyberbullying and the impact on
5 schools and communities. Certainly, we all in this
6 room can think back to a time in our lives when we were
7 young and potentially more vulnerable to the challenges
8 of bullying.

9 Some wisdom at that time shared may have been
10 that the victims just need to become more resilient.
11 And my colleague spoke about that and that it's
12 important to be resilient and to remove yourself from
13 the bullying.

14 But with the growing use of digital devices
15 and student focus on social media platforms, bullying
16 is reaching children in more places, more negatively
17 and more often than at any time in our history.

18 Certainly, even all of us in this room have
19 been recipients of some version of cyberbullying. And
20 while many of us have the thick skin necessary to
21 continue our work through negative statements, students
22 rarely have the experience or training and never have

1 had this much contact before in history with their
2 bullies. Bullying now follows students to where once
3 they may have felt safe.

4 We have also seen the challenge that people
5 will often be far more aggressive and negative with
6 their language on social media or through cyber means
7 than they would in a face-to-face scenario.

8 More often now, we deal with the challenges of
9 a bullying situation that did not begin in school. It
10 did not occur on school equipment or on a school
11 activity. Yet when the students get back to the school
12 for learning, it becomes a challenge that all of us
13 must resolve.

14 Our district policy enables staff members to
15 investigate, to provide discipline to bullies and
16 create a safety plan for students who are bullied on
17 social media outside of school hours and days.

18 However, there are challenges that come with
19 our review of social media and bullying situations as
20 the district can only enforce a safety plan while the
21 students are in school. Additionally, bullying that is
22 not captured with a screenshot or fake accounts that

1 are used for bullying cannot be traced.

2 While the district can petition social media
3 organizations to remove accounts that are used for
4 bullying, social media organizations sometimes do, but
5 they are not able to assist us in ascertaining
6 information about account creators, limiting our
7 ability to take action.

8 The legislature in the state of Iowa has
9 considered but not yet passed legislation to provide us
10 strength in the arena of following through on
11 challenges born on social media.

12 We need more ability to use social media in
13 our investigations of school-based bullying scenarios,
14 when applicable of course, and to take action against
15 cyberbullies.

16 Without the kind of support that legislation
17 can provide, it is challenging to take action to
18 deliver consequences to a cyberbully who began that
19 negative action outside of school and on their own
20 device.

21 In Sioux City, our district is committed to
22 providing an environment where all are treated with

1 dignity and respect. Instances of bullying are always
2 investigated and acted upon when we are made aware of
3 those challenges. Anti-bullying in education in Sioux
4 City begins in preschool and continues through
5 graduation.

6 We too, Madam Secretary, are a positive
7 behavior interventions and supports district. Every
8 elementary school in our district uses the evidence-
9 based second step program, a curriculum shown to
10 decrease problem behaviors and promote success as well
11 and to develop a sense of safety and support.

12 In recent years, our district also uses film
13 clips for character education in our middle schools, a
14 program where licensed clips from popular Hollywood
15 movies teach age-appropriate lessons about mutual
16 respect.

17 Every high school in our district has a group
18 of student leaders who serve as mentors in violence
19 prevention through an MVP program where these MVP
20 student leaders use lifelike scenarios to deliver
21 programming to their peers to curb gender violence,
22 sexual harassment and bullying, to prevent bullying so

1 that students know how to behave when they find
2 themselves in a situation of bullying.

3 We also collaborate with a company to scan all
4 public social media data to discover potential threats,
5 whether that's bullying-based threats or school
6 violence threats. And they provide us with actionable
7 alerts to discover those -- as they discover those
8 negative posts.

9 We recently added a new component to our
10 required freshmen success strategies course where
11 students earn recognition for appropriate digital
12 citizenship.

13 As a district, we ask parents and community
14 members to be our partner in educating our youth by
15 reporting instances of concern through an online chat
16 tool that we provide to our community.

17 Thank you again for the opportunity to address
18 this commission. Know that I desire to continually
19 improve my work to reduce the challenges of bullying in
20 our schools and communities. And I welcome the
21 opportunity to engage in further discourse,
22 collaboration and action.

1 Q&A DISCUSSION

2 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you so much, Dr. Gausman.

3 And both of you, both of our panelists, really
4 appreciate your insights shared on bullying and
5 cyberbullying, Dr. Hinduja, as a researcher, and Dr.
6 Gausman, as a practitioner.

7 We're going to now have a short time for
8 questions and answers. And I'd like to begin with a
9 question I think primarily for Dr. Gausman. You've
10 alluded to working within your community and engaging
11 the community on helping within the school.

12 Can you elaborate a little bit more on that?
13 How does the community -- how do you involve the
14 community and is there a role for the community to
15 play, an important role for the community to play in
16 this regard?

17 DR. GAUSMAN: That's correct, and thank you.
18 As I've mentioned, you know, this is a community-based
19 problem. And, you know, bullying doesn't just occur in
20 schools. It occurs in shopping malls, sporting events,
21 just about anywhere people gather. And so, it's very
22 important to us to use those resources in the community

1 to gather more reports.

2 We know that only about 25 percent of
3 instances of bullying are even reported to us. We
4 can't act on that which is not reported. So we're
5 doing more work.

6 Our data shows that we're finding more
7 instances of bullying. We're taking more action. Our
8 student surveys also indicate that they now feel more
9 resilient to stand up to bullying as a result of those
10 community agencies coming together.

11 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you so much. I'd like to
12 invite my fellow commissioners here to ask questions at
13 this point.

14 MS. GRADY: So both of you talked about the
15 pervasive nature of bullying and that social media is a
16 way that exacerbates how pervasive it is and then
17 talked about tools schools and communities can use to
18 better create a resilient student body and defeat
19 bullying before it starts.

20 But my question goes on the opposite end of
21 the spectrum. When do things get to the point where
22 it's appropriate to escalate to involve law enforcement

1 associated with bullying and what are we doing or do
2 you have any insights in terms of opportunities to what
3 would be triggers to engage law enforcement and what
4 tools or communication pathways could we better
5 facilitate to make sure we're taking appropriate
6 action?

7 DR. HINDUJA: The vast majority of bullying,
8 cyberbullying is -- (off mic) -- some of it does cross
9 over the line, for example, threats, content that
10 involve sexually explicit material or involving minors
11 -- (off mic) -- et cetera. (Off mic) -- some sort of
12 relationship with the liaison, with local law
13 enforcement so that they can -- (off mic).

14 Plus, I would also say that as I study other
15 forms of problems online -- (off mic) -- so law
16 enforcement has to -- (off mic) -- to go ahead and take
17 that evidence and to -- (off mic) -- we also want to
18 make sure that they don't approach this with a fear-
19 based mentality.

20 They have seen the worst of the worst out
21 there. But we need to be very pro technology and pro
22 kids when we're working on this issue.

1 DR. GAUSMAN: We too have found the police
2 enforcement -- we're great partners with our police
3 department and our sheriff's department. It's
4 important that we -- we're one of the districts that
5 has school resource officers in our buildings.

6 We've got to be very clear that just about
7 everything they do as work need not be criminal in
8 nature. It's proactive, preventative in nature. (Off
9 mic) -- creating the proper relationships and
10 conversations between students so that when an event --
11 (off mic).

12 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Do you have, Dr.
13 Gausman, any studies that you've been able to do in
14 your school that can show that there are certain
15 programs that tend to reduce hostility and meanness in
16 cyber activities? Have you got any ideas about that?

17 DR. GAUSMAN: We do. We've been blessed. And
18 I'm sorry, I'm not confident this microphone is working
19 very well. But we've been blessed with a partnership
20 with the Waitt family and the Waitt Institute for
21 Violence Prevention. And the Waitt family began the
22 Gateway Computer Company some time ago and they now are

1 partners with our district as we work to implement
2 programs that they have helped bring to our district.

3 The mentors in violence prevention program
4 that I mentioned to you earlier is very important to
5 our success where students mentor other students in
6 relational scenarios.

7 That's so important because students don't
8 always receive information from their teachers or
9 superintendent of schools. Quite often, they receive
10 it from one another.

11 And so, when we can train those student
12 leaders to lead other students for preventing negative
13 relationship behavior, it's very important to us.

14 We also have used programs like coaching boys
15 into men, indicating to why we might ask male students
16 to be aggressive on the field of play but not to be
17 aggressive in relationships, using programs like --
18 using programs that scan social media so that we can
19 discover anything negative that's out there because
20 again if it's not reported to us, we just can't take
21 action on it.

22 MR. HARGAN: So thanks for the -- for sort of

1 these discussions. I'm particularly interested in some
2 of the discussions that you all had about the sources
3 and the elements underlying cyberbullying.

4 So understanding this is I think Dr. Hinduja,
5 you had talked about the notion of connectedness and
6 climate, this notion of sort of social alienation and
7 isolation.

8 How in a sort of world of social media and
9 digital media which seems to kind of cut against a
10 connectedness, at least on a sort of daily basis, how
11 do you foresee sort of an increasing digital influenced
12 world, how do you create a sense of connectedness that
13 might reverse these instincts towards cyberbullying and
14 all the other sort of bad behaviors?

15 I mean, how do you get -- how do you undo that
16 when it seems like everything's going the other way?

17 DR. HINDUJA: Yeah. I'm not sure if you can
18 undo it online. But I think you can bear a lot of
19 fruit with efforts on campuses. We hear the term
20 trusted adults. We tell our students that when they're
21 being bullied, when they're being cyberbullied, they
22 should go to a trusted adult for help.

1 But I like the term askable adult. If we can
2 just identify point people on every single campus who
3 say look, I'm an askable adult. You can come to me
4 when you're dealing with issues of your relationships,
5 when you're dealing with issues as it relates to your
6 academics, at home.

7 You can ask me how I navigated the
8 complexities of adolescence and I'm here for you. I
9 think that goes a long way in terms of building
10 meaningful adult bonds, which can then sort of serve as
11 the buffer against the isolation individuals might
12 experience online.

13 DR. GAUSMAN: If I might add to that as well,
14 you know, you asked about programs that we have. And
15 in a bullying scenario, there's always the bully and
16 there's the victim or the victim of bullying.

17 And there's always bystanders. And on social
18 media, there are bystanders always and there seem to be
19 more and more of them.

20 We really work hard in our community to create
21 a program of upstanders, so that they're not just by
22 standing and watching bullying occur, but they actually

1 stand up, talk to those involved and askable -- I love
2 that term, askable adult -- so that the students can be
3 a part of solving the problem, even if it's only by
4 reporting that which they've discovered online more in
5 person.

6 MR. HARGAN: Yeah, because the notion of
7 connectedness seemed to be something that was a larger
8 concept. I mean, not just between adults and the young
9 but also amongst the young as well who are -- I don't
10 know if they're ultimately the people who are going to
11 solve that problem amongst themselves.

12 SEC. DEVOS: Could I explore a little bit more
13 the notion of upstander?

14 DR. GAUSMAN: Sure. Sure.

15 SEC. DEVOS: Do you recognize and acknowledge
16 them in some way or how do you -- how do you encourage
17 that?

18 DR. GAUSMAN: We actually -- yeah, we actually
19 do. We do that through our training program in MVP and
20 the mentoring program that is there. We also do that
21 as a reward system through the positive behavior
22 interventions and supports program that we've talked

1 about.

2 And it sounds like you've toured a district
3 that has that program well implemented. And so, you
4 know, as the name dictates, we're there to recognize
5 positive behavior when it occurs and to acknowledge
6 that so that students understand the value of that
7 positive behavior moving forward.

8 SEC. DEVOS: All right. Thank you both again
9 very, very much for being here today and for everything
10 you've shared with us.

11 DR. GAUSMAN: Thank you.

12 PANEL 2: YOUTH CONSUMPTION OF VIOLENT ENTERTAINMENT

13 SEC. DEVOS: So we will now move to our next
14 panel and we'll give a moment to change. Welcome. Our
15 next panel is going to present remarks on youth
16 consumption of violent entertainment. And our first
17 speaker is Dr. L. Rowell Huesmann.

18 Dr. Huesmann is currently a professor of
19 psychology and communication at the University of
20 Michigan and director of the aggression research
21 program in the research center for group dynamics at
22 Michigan's Institute for Social Research. That is a

1 very long name. But welcome, Dr. Huesmann.

2 DR. HUESMANN: Thank you, Secretary DeVos. As
3 you said, I'm Rowell Huesmann. I'm the - (off mic) --
4 professor of psychology -(off mic) -- University of
5 Michigan and director of the Aggression Research
6 Program.

7 I have studied violent behavior for over 50
8 years, since the late 1960s when I was a young
9 professor at Yale University and I've written many
10 articles and many books about this and received a
11 number of awards for my research.

12 I tell you these things to establish some of
13 my credibility. But I also must say that I'm somewhat
14 disappointed when I look back at those 50 years in that
15 our science has not really resulted in producing very
16 safe school environments.

17 In my brief presentation, I want to tell you
18 some of what I think are clear unambiguous facts about
19 what causes violent behavior. But I must start by
20 saying we're not very good at this and we probably will
21 never be very good.

22 For example, we're never going to be very good

1 at predicting ahead of time who's going to shoot up a
2 school. We know a lot about what increases the risk
3 that a person will behave violently. But knowing a lot
4 about risk is a long way from predicting with any
5 modicum of certainty.

6 Because I'm a psychologist, I want to begin by
7 disagreeing with two seemingly widely held beliefs
8 about school shootings. First, there's a belief we can
9 eliminate school shootings by screening better for
10 serious mental illness.

11 People who are seriously mentally ill are not
12 predictably at higher risk of behaving violently unless
13 they're paranoid schizophrenics or have hallucinations
14 or delusions telling them to do something like that.

15 Second, there's the belief that low self-
16 esteem youth who are rejected are particularly prone to
17 be violent. That also is not borne out by the
18 evidence.

19 Rather, the youth who are more likely to be
20 behave violently are those narcissistic youth who are
21 threatened. That does not mean that low self-esteem is
22 positive. It's just -- I'm just talking about the

1 relation to behaving violently.

2 The fact is that people never commit serious
3 acts of violence such as school shootings because of
4 one factor in their lives.

5 There's always a convergence of predisposing
6 personal factors -- for example, growing up exposed to
7 a lot of violence, physiological factors that
8 predispose people to be more impulsive -- and
9 situational factors that precipitate the event such as
10 being frustrated, rejected by a girlfriend, criticized
11 by peers or even hot weather.

12 Predisposing personal factors, whether
13 biological or environmental, operate by changing brain
14 circuits over time while precipitating environmental
15 factors operate by activating these circuits that
16 already have been encoded over time in the brain.

17 We know that there are three particularly
18 important kinds of circuits or cognitions influencing
19 social behavior. First, schemas about the world that
20 we live in; second, scripts -- second, scripts for how
21 we should behave socially; and thirdly, normative
22 beliefs about what kind of social behaviors are okay.

1 Individuals who have a large repertoire of
2 violent scripts for solving -- second, scripts for how
3 we should behave socially; and thirdly, normative
4 beliefs about what kind of social behaviors are okay.

5 Individuals who have a large repertoire of
6 violent scripts for solving problems are more
7 predisposed to behave violently.

8 Individuals who have schemas that the world is
9 a hostile, mean place are more likely to perceive
10 hostility in others and behave violently. And
11 individuals who have normative beliefs that it's okay
12 to behave violently are more likely to behave
13 violently.

14 In a second, I'll say a little bit about how
15 these individuals acquire these predispositions. But
16 first, let me talk about how they're activated in a
17 specific situation.

18 A very fundamental brain process is spreading
19 activation, or what we call priming. Whenever we see,
20 hear or otherwise experience something, whatever we see
21 produces a spreading activation in the brain of
22 everything associated with it in the past.

1 Thus, exposure to violence in the family,
2 among peers, in video games, on TV, in movies, in
3 neighborhoods immediately activates violent scripts and
4 social norms related to violence.

5 The activation may not last very long. But it
6 makes it more likely that one will behave violently in
7 the short-term. This priming event does not even need
8 to be an entire violent act.

9 Anything associated in the brain with violence
10 can serve as a prime of violent scripts. The emotion
11 of anger primes aggressive scripts, as does the sight
12 of a perceived enemy.

13 Perhaps most relevant to school shootings, we
14 know that the mere sight of a weapon will prime
15 aggressive scripts for using weapons.

16 Of course, if a youth does not already have
17 violent scripts encoded in the brain, violent scripts
18 can't be activated or primed. If a youth does not have
19 normative beliefs approving of violence, a violent
20 script won't even be used, even if it is activated.

21 So how do scripts and normative beliefs get
22 encoded in the brain, particularly ones promoting

1 violence? The answer is through learning.

2 Undoubtedly reinforcement learning plays a
3 role. But the consensus among psychologists today who
4 have studied aggressive and violent behavior is that
5 the more important process is imitation or, more
6 generally, observational learning.

7 Humans imitate what they see from infancy on.
8 Children see and children do. But they don't simply
9 mimic the behavior they see. They're more intelligent
10 than that.

11 You see how someone solves a social problem
12 and you infer the script they're following and you
13 encode that script. You see the belief they must have
14 to do that and you encode the script -- you encode the
15 belief that they have into your brain.

16 The more youth is exposed to violence in the
17 family, in the neighborhood, among peers, on
18 television, in movies or in video games, the most
19 violent scripts they will encode in their brains and
20 the more their normative beliefs will become accepting
21 of violence.

22 The more youth observes weapons being used to

1 solve social problems in any of these venues, the more
2 likely the youth will be to encode scripts for using
3 weapons to solve social problems and the more accepting
4 will be the youth of using weapons to solve social
5 problems.

6 Of course, youth who already have normative
7 beliefs that violence is wrong will be less likely to
8 encode new scripts or new beliefs.

9 In summary, there can be no question in my
10 mind that repeatedly observing violence in the family,
11 among peers, in the neighborhood, in TV or movies or in
12 video games increases the risk of a youth behaving
13 violently because of the violence promoting cognitions
14 they inevitably encode.

15 Similarly, observing violence with weapons
16 increases the risk of behaving violently with weapons.

17 When a youth with such heightened risk factors
18 comes into a situation that primes these cognitions --
19 anger, some other violence -- disastrous violent
20 behavior may follow. The availability of weapons for
21 youth exacerbates this problem in two ways. First, the
22 mere sight of the weapons primes violent scripts.

1 SEC. DEVOS: Dr. Huesmann, sorry to interrupt.
2 Your time has expired.

3 DR. HUESMANN: Oh, okay.

4 SEC. DEVOS: And out of respect for the other
5 speakers and participants --

6 DR. HUESMANN: Sure.

7 SEC. DEVOS: I'd like to ask that you conclude
8 your remarks now and we will get around to some
9 questions in a couple of moments.

10 DR. HUESMANN: Okay. I'll say one more thing.
11 My presentation is focused on well-established
12 psychological knowledge. But I haven't answered the
13 question what might best predict future violence.

14 And the simple answer is past violent
15 behavior. Study after study has shown the best
16 predictor of future violent behavior is past violent
17 behavior. Thank you.

18 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you so much, Dr. Huesmann.
19 Our second speaker is Dr. Christopher J. Ferguson, who
20 is professor in the department of psychology at Stetson
21 University in Florida. Welcome, Dr. Ferguson.

22 DR. FERGUSON: Thank you. I took the liberty

1 of making a few graphs, if I could have permission to
2 pass those to you?

3 SEC. DEVOS: Certainly.

4 DR. FERGUSON: So thank you for having me here
5 today. Again, my name is Chris Ferguson. And I'm a
6 professor of psychology at Stetson University and what
7 I'd like to do is really kind of briefly go through
8 different pools of research evidence that we have on
9 entertainment violence.

10 So the first we have is a relatively large
11 pool of studies of what we call aggression. And it's
12 important to understand that most of the measures we
13 use to study aggression are related to relatively minor
14 behavior.

15 So we're literally talking about putting
16 someone's hand in a bucket of ice water, giving someone
17 spicy sauce when they don't like spicy sauce, filling
18 in the missing letters of words so that K-I-blank-blank
19 might spell out kill or kiss, depending on whether
20 you're thinking more aggressive.

21 Obviously, these things are interesting. But
22 they don't necessarily tell us a lot about school

1 safety and school violence and things that are really
2 important to us.

3 It's also important to point out that this
4 pool of research has been generally inconsistent.

5 There are some studies that find evidence for
6 effects. There are some studies that don't find
7 evidence for effects. And there are even a few studies
8 that find that exposure to entertainment violence may
9 actually reduce aggression of this sort.

10 The other thing that's happening more recently
11 is that these studies are not replicating well. In
12 some of the newer research that's coming out under more
13 rigorous methods in the last few years, newer scholars
14 are having difficulty finding the same results of some
15 of the older studies.

16 And also, the effects from most of the studies
17 that even do find effects tend to be very small. And
18 there's disagreement among scholars about how to
19 interpret them. My own personal interpretation is that
20 they tend to be what I would call trivial. They're
21 unlikely to have real impact in the real world.

22 And the U.S. Supreme Court actually did

1 consider this body of studies in 2011 in the Brown v.
2 EMA case when they considered regulation of violence in
3 video games.

4 And I'll quote from the majority decision that
5 was written by Justice Scalia: "These studies have been
6 rejected by every court to consider them and with good
7 reason." And I agree with this assessment by the
8 Supreme Court.

9 We do have a smaller pool of research that
10 actually looks at violence as an outcome. Obviously,
11 these are more correlational or longitudinal. We can't
12 have people be violent in a laboratory setting. So we
13 can track kids over time and look at what kind of
14 factors predict their later violence.

15 So figure one actually presents an example of
16 one of these studies that we've done in our lab. There
17 are other studies around the world that have come to
18 similar conclusions. And what we tend to find is that
19 entertainment violence is not very predictive of later
20 violent behavior, bullying outcomes, things like that.

21 We tend to find things like mental health,
22 family environment, things like that tend to be much

1 stronger predictors or risk factors for violence.

2 The other pool of data that we can look at is
3 epidemiological data in society. And what we look at
4 here is do rates of consumption of violent media by
5 society correlate with actual violence in society.

6 This is correlational data again. So we have
7 to be a little bit careful about causality. But it is
8 still interesting.

9 And what we tend to find is that as society
10 has consumed more violent media over the last several
11 decades, youth violence, homicides have all plummeted.
12 So there are correlations. They're just in the wrong
13 direction, for the most part.

14 So figure two actually presents the
15 correlation between PG-13 rated movie violence and
16 youth violence. And you'll note that what a lot of
17 people don't realize is that youth violence has
18 actually dropped by over 82 percent over the last two-
19 and-a-half decades.

20 Figure three presents the same basic data, but
21 for violent video game consumption in society. Again,
22 these are very strong correlations, just in the wrong

1 direction from what people sometimes think is actually
2 going on.

3 We do have some data on mass shooters as well.
4 One of the things that happens with mass shooting
5 events is what's called confirmation bias. And what
6 happens oftentimes is when a shooter is a young male,
7 as happened with Parkland or Santa Fe very recently,
8 people start talking about movies and video games.

9 But when a shooter is an older male, like the
10 64-year-old male who attacked a concert in Las Vegas
11 last year, people don't usually mention video games or
12 media or the woman who shot up a YouTube office several
13 months ago.

14 That allows an illusion of a correlation to
15 exist where none in fact occurs because people are
16 ignoring the cases that don't actually fit the data.

17 What we know, and this is presented in figure
18 four, we've had data going back to 2002 that was done
19 by the Department of Education and the U.S. Secret
20 Service looking at a lot of factors related to school
21 shootings.

22 And the evidence they present, it's not

1 perfect by any means, but suggests that mass shooters,
2 if anything, consume less rather than more violent
3 media than other males of their age.

4 And lastly in figure five, we can also look at
5 the cross-national data. And what we can see is that
6 consumption of video games per capita across nations
7 does not correlate with gun violence.

8 And you can actually change that graphic and
9 put in homicides or put in assaults or sexual assaults
10 and the numbers all kind if work out the same. There's
11 no correlation cross-nationally between entertainment
12 media consumption, particularly video games in this
13 case, and actual violence that occurs in the society.

14 In fact, some of the countries like South
15 Korea and the Netherlands that consume the most video
16 games per capita, are amongst the least violent on the
17 planet.

18 And then, there's also the issue I think
19 that's kind of interesting is like, you know, why does
20 this keep coming up and is there kind of a consensus
21 among scholars in the field about the effects of
22 entertainment media. And that's what I document in

1 figure six, is that there is no consensus among
2 scholars about these types of effects. There's a lot
3 of disagreements.

4 And what you'll see is in figure six, I
5 compare the consensus over climate change, which is
6 about 99.4 percent among scholars who study that,
7 compared to mild aggression and also violent crime as
8 an outcome.

9 And as we see, the closer that scholars are
10 asked about issues related to violent crime, the more
11 skeptical scholars become of there being any
12 substantial effects for entertainment violence.

13 So what sometimes happens is we have
14 professional guilds like my own. I'm a fellow of the
15 American Psychological Association. These
16 organizations typically exist to represent us. They
17 market psychology and they are sometimes guilty of
18 overestimating the amount of effects.

19 So in 2015, the APA did come out with a policy
20 statement that, to their defense, did not link video
21 games to violence in society but did suggest that there
22 may be some conclusive evidence for effects on

1 aggression, mild aggression once again.

2 However, their taskforce prompted an open
3 letter by 230 scholars, over 230 scholars asking them
4 to stop releasing policy statements linking video games
5 to aggression.

6 And also, just last year, the APA's own media
7 psychology and technology division released its own
8 policy statement asking policymakers like yourselves
9 and news media to stop linking entertainment violence
10 and video game violence to violence in society because
11 the evidence is not there to support the existence of
12 such links.

13 And again, there are government reviews by the
14 United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden and of course the
15 United States Supreme Court in Brown v. EMA that have
16 all come to more or less the same conclusion as I'm
17 presenting to you today. And that's basically what I
18 have to present. So I'm happy to take any questions at
19 this time.

20 Q&A DISCUSSION

21 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Dr. Ferguson, and
22 again, Dr. Huesmann. We will now have time for some

1 questions. And I'll begin by asking both of you if you
2 have thoughts on the efficacy of the current media
3 rating systems. Do they make a difference? Do they
4 not? Can they be improved?

5 DR. FERGUSON: I can start -- I can start with
6 that. Yeah, so they vary. The last report we had on
7 that was from the Federal Trade Commission. I believe
8 it was 2009, I believe.

9 And their findings were that the two standout
10 ones were the ESRB, the Entertainment Software Rating
11 Board system, which is the video game rating system,
12 and the MPAA, the Motion Picture Association of
13 America.

14 And their conclusions were that those two
15 systems were highly successful and generally effective
16 at turning people away at the point of sale. There
17 were more concerns particularly about the Recording
18 Industry Association of America, the sticker. That's
19 the explicit lyrics sticker that you get.

20 You tend to get kind of a forbidden fruit
21 effect with that. That kind of draws people to the
22 music rather than keeping them away from it.

1 And then, the television system's kind of
2 confusing. The letters they use don't always make a
3 lot of sense. People don't tend to use the V-chip very
4 much. So my impression is that the video game system
5 and the movie system are both very effective, the other
6 two maybe not quite as much.

7 DR. HUESMANN: If I could comment? People
8 don't use the V-chip. They don't attend much to
9 television ratings of violence. And the far more
10 important rating is the violence rating than just for
11 mature or non-mature audiences.

12 And the sale of video games doesn't seem to be
13 affected very much about the ratings. Most kids say
14 that their parents don't attend to the ratings and that
15 they can get a violent game any time they want. So the
16 ratings seem to have no real effect on the purchase of
17 games.

18 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Is there any data that
19 shows that if parents adhere to those ratings, that it
20 would have a beneficial effect on a child?

21 DR. HUESMANN: Not -- I don't know of any such
22 study, Attorney General Sessions. There might be. But

1 I don't know of it. But I do know that if parents
2 attended to ratings and controlled what their children
3 -- thought about what their children were seeing or
4 playing, the children would be much better off.

5 DR. FERGUSON: If I could respond a little
6 too, I think that, you know, in my view, the ratings
7 systems are really there to be informative for parents.
8 And some parents may decide that what's right for their
9 family or their child may be different from what's
10 right for another family or child.

11 So I mean, my thing that I tell parents is
12 simply to be informed, you know, to try to find out
13 what's in a video game, to find out what's in a movie
14 or whatever before making a decision about what to
15 allow for a particular child.

16 So, you know, for some kids, it may -- I'll be
17 very frank with you. For some kids, it may be
18 perfectly fine to take them to an R-rated movie when
19 they're younger than 17 or to play an M-rated video
20 game. Probably for most kids, it's probably fine, you
21 know. But for other families, that might not be the
22 right decision.

1 So, I mean, I think we have to kind of think
2 of the ratings systems as a tool that helps families
3 make decisions for themselves. And they may not always
4 make the decision that we would make, you know, as
5 parents. And that's okay, I think, for the most part,
6 so.

7 MS. GRADY: So Dr. Huesmann, you spoke to
8 normative behaviors that are formed based on exposure
9 to social solutions through violence and the impact
10 that different family, neighborhood, peers and as well
11 as media have on forming those patterns. And then, you
12 also talked about risk and prior violence being the
13 best indicator of future violence.

14 DR. HUESMANN: Right.

15 MS. GRADY: Did you see any factors that would
16 indicate that even individuals who have that exposure
17 to violence, that they would not then act on or
18 basically a positive risk factor where that would not
19 translate into negative violent behavior, even if the
20 individual has been exposed? So any positive risk
21 indicators in your research?

22 DR. HUESMANN: Yes. There certainly are

1 positive things. What we might call positive
2 parenting, including monitoring and appropriate
3 teaching reinforcement has been shown to moderate
4 children's tendencies to imitate and mimic what they
5 see, for example.

6 The fact is no one factor causes kids to
7 behave more violently. And the -- it's the
8 accumulation of factors that causes them to. So yes,
9 there are many positive parenting things you could
10 probably all think of that would moderate the effects
11 of the habitual exposure to video violence.

12 MR. HARGAN: I mean, in listening to both of
13 you, I saw something of a little bit of a contradiction
14 between the notion that imitation or learning about
15 violence on the one hand sort of begets violence and on
16 the other hand that we see the more exposure to at
17 least fictional violence doesn't seem to be correlated
18 with actual violence in the world.

19 Is there a distinction that you could draw
20 between observation, you know, at a distance -- that
21 is, an observation on a screen, whether it's on
22 television or movies or video games on the one hand and

1 then observation of violence in real life --

2 DR. HUESMANN: Yeah.

3 MR. HARGAN: -- that is, when you see it
4 happening in your neighborhood or your home, that's
5 more predictive violence when you see violence -- I
6 think you said violence working or violence works --

7 DR. HUESMANN: Yeah. Right.

8 MR. HARGAN: -- whether that's -- there's a
9 distinction that you've seen from an academic point of
10 view between -- a gap between violence that's seen in
11 one's real -- in one's own life --

12 DR. HUESMANN: Yeah.

13 MR. HARGAN: -- and violence seen at a
14 fictional remove.

15 DR. HUESMANN: Well, let me say a couple of
16 things. First, Professor Ferguson and I have disagreed
17 for many, many years and argued vociferously in a lot
18 of venues. And I don't think this is the best venue to
19 rehash that argument. So I will restrain myself.

20 But to the point you state, one of the
21 important things is how a child perceives whatever
22 they're seeing. Do they perceive it as representative

1 of the real world or not?

2 For example, I have a study that we did in Oak
3 Park, Illinois in 1977 with a very large sample of
4 children that showed that about 50 percent of first
5 grade girls thought Charlie's Angels told about life
6 just like it really is. Now, when you get up to the
7 fifth grade, that goes -- plummets way down.

8 So it depends on when you're looking at
9 anything, in the media or outside your window. Do you
10 perceive that as like the world is or not? If you
11 don't think the world's like that, then you're much
12 less likely to encode that script and follow that
13 script later on.

14 But the idea that somehow what you see through
15 the window should just be completely different than
16 what you see on the TV box or on the movie screen just
17 really has no basis in psychology.

18 DR. FERGUSON: Yeah. I actually one time
19 named an article "Does Doing Media Violence Research
20 Make You Aggressive?" But yeah, I would argue that
21 indeed there is a distinction between what happens in
22 the real world versus what happens in the fictional

1 universe.

2 There actually have been a few, just very
3 recently, studies of violent video games that are brain
4 imaging studies.

5 And Simone Kühn has done one of these studies
6 and there have been a few others that suggest that
7 playing violent video games does not have the
8 desensitization effect on the brain that we might
9 expect from people who are exposed to violence in the
10 real world.

11 So I would argue -- certainly there are
12 obviously disagreements between scholars amongst these
13 things -- that our brains do seem to be efficient at --
14 even from fairly young ages, at distinguishing between
15 reality and fiction. Obviously, it's something that
16 develops over time.

17 But some of the evidence suggests that it
18 starts at age three and it's done by age 12
19 essentially. And you know, we do treat fictional
20 scenarios different than we do real life.

21 I'll be blunt. I love war movies. But I
22 would have no interest in going to an actual war

1 because the emotional experience would be very
2 different for those scenarios.

3 So I do think we need to get to a point where
4 we're not treating fictional exposures to violence the
5 same way we think about exposure to violence to the
6 family, exposure to violence in the neighborhood or
7 violence among our peers.

8 SEC. DEVOS: One more question. Yeah.

9 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Sure, maybe one more.
10 There's sort of a layman's view out there and I don't
11 know -- never heard any research actually about it,
12 that if you have some sort of predisposition to
13 violence and then you are -- you may be one of those
14 who are triggered by a violent, you know -- steady diet
15 of violent video games and/or movies. Is there any
16 validity to that?

17 DR. HUESMANN: I would say there is, yes. If
18 you have a predisposition to violence, then you
19 experience violence, it's likely to activate.

20 Why do you have a predisposition? Because
21 somewhere in the past you've developed scripts that it
22 seems okay to be violent and so on. And if that's

1 activated by something you see, violence seen now,
2 you're more likely to behave violently.

3 So yes, I mean, the exposure to violence is
4 going to have a different effect on a child who's
5 learned very positive, pro-social scripts and doesn't
6 really have any scripts for behaving violently than a
7 child who has been -- developed these scripts in the
8 past. So yes, the predisposition does matter how the
9 current exposure to violence will affect you.

10 SEC. DEVOS: Dr. Ferguson?

11 DR. FERGUSON: I'm going to continue the he
12 said/she said unfortunately. We've actually done a few
13 studies with that and actually in our lab and other
14 labs, we have not found sort of a vulnerable
15 population, if you will.

16 So we've done some actual research with
17 preexisting depression, antisocial traits, ADD and have
18 not found them to be influenced by violent media any
19 more than other kids, which is to say zero.

20 And there actually was another study that came
21 out of the University of Missouri that looked at young
22 adults with autism spectrum disorders and I think that

1 was prompted by the Sandy Hook shooting in 2012, that
2 once again was an experimental study and found that
3 once again there was no difference between young adults
4 with autism spectrum versus those that were sort of
5 non-spectrum adults in terms of their response to
6 violent video games in a laboratory aggression setting,
7 which again, both samples was a zero effect.

8 PANEL 3: EFFECTS OF PRESS COVERAGE ON MASS SHOOTINGS

9 SEC. DEVOS: I'm afraid that will have to be
10 the last word for this panel. Thank you again, Dr.
11 Huesmann and Dr. Ferguson. And we'll now move to our
12 final panel and we are going to hear about effects of
13 press coverage on mass shootings.

14 Our first speaker is Dr. Jennifer B. Johnston.
15 Dr. Johnston is an assistant professor of psychology at
16 the Western New Mexico University. Welcome, Dr.
17 Johnston.

18 DR. JOHNSTON: Thank you for having me,
19 Commission. I appreciate it. My research involves
20 media's impact on our psychology. I'm a media
21 psychologist, if you will. And I have specifically
22 focused on whether mass homicide is contagious and what

1 role the media has played in spreading this disease, so
2 to speak.

3 The good news is that we can, I believe,
4 prevent most of these shootings. There are probably
5 four key ways to do that. I will spend the most time
6 on the first because that is my area.

7 First and foremost, reduce media contagion.
8 Secondly, we need early detection of suicidal and
9 homicidal ideation. We need school threat assessment
10 and intervention programs. And we need to reduce
11 access to semiautomatic and automatic weapons.

12 Thinking of the panel before me, I want to
13 point out that most of our research on violence and
14 aggression is related to single homicide, manslaughter,
15 one-to-one kind of crime.

16 And I would argue that it appears mass
17 shootings, it's a different animal. It's against type
18 in why we think it's happening and what may be
19 triggering it, to a large degree.

20 So I'm going to talk about how prevalent is
21 mass shooting and how that's related to media. Do we
22 have confirmation of media contagion? How strong is

1 media contagion? Why do we think it's happening? And
2 what can we do? How do we deal with this?

3 First of all, there has been a threefold
4 increase in mass shootings, as many of you are aware,
5 over just the last 15 or 16 years.

6 For example, from 1950 to 2000, there were
7 only about two incidents per year. And then, from 2000
8 to 2003, that rose to seven incidents per year. By
9 2012, we were at 15 incidents per year. 2016, we were
10 at 20 incidents per year. And last year unfortunately
11 was a record year, 30 mass shootings in 2017.

12 When I looked at the usual suspects, as
13 they're often called, what might be causing this,
14 violence in entertainment and exposure that way,
15 firearms or gun laws and mental health identification
16 and resources, only one of those -- or media contagion,
17 that is the one that has a corresponding meteoric rise
18 in the last 15 years.

19 So around the turn of this century is when 24-
20 hour news coverage really came into its own as well as
21 the rise of social media, whereas when you look at the
22 other three potential causes, they haven't changed

1 much. In fact, gun laws may have loosened and mental
2 health identification is often better than it was
3 before. And so, that's one piece of this puzzle that I
4 looked at.

5 So do we have confirmation of this? Yes, we
6 have 11 studies now that have evaluated whether media
7 contagion is real and what's involved. All 11 found a
8 contagion effect.

9 Let me tell you a little bit about the
10 strength of this contagion. Is it negligible or not?
11 One of the important aspects is that all 11 studies
12 also found that the time period in which contagion
13 tends to happen is about two weeks. That's the
14 strongest time period.

15 And so, one study in particular, Towers out of
16 Arizona State University found that the strength of the
17 contagion is maybe about 22 percent. So for one
18 incident, there's a 22 percent increase that another
19 will occur in a short timeframe.

20 When you get to three or four incidents,
21 there's a hundred percent guarantee that we will have a
22 fifth mass shooting, or school shooting in particular

1 in 30 days. So there's a cumulative effect of the
2 impact of these shootings.

3 Social media as well, there's a study by
4 Garcia-Bernardo and others that indicates that when
5 tweets rise above 10 per million in the days following
6 a shooting, there's a 50 percent likelihood that
7 another shooting will occur in that region. If tweets
8 stay at that level, just 10 per million for 19 days,
9 there's an 85 percent chance that another shooting will
10 occur.

11 Why is this happening? Well, some of the
12 other panelists talk about are there crosscutting
13 traits that mass shooters share.

14 And this is where I think they're a bit
15 different from other types of homicide, which we know
16 are decreasing in the U.S. and across the world. And
17 it's also people mentioned our unique problem to some
18 degree in the U.S.

19 And so, I think that has something to do with
20 it. We have a unique media system. We're kind of
21 world leaders in that way. But in this instance, it
22 may be somewhat a negative type of leadership.

1 So what I found in my research is that there
2 are three main traits that shooters tend to share, so
3 the majority, not all. They are a bit against type.
4 They don't tend to have a prior history of violence,
5 which is one of our best ways of predicting what
6 they're going to do. So we don't have that to work
7 with.

8 They tend to be depressed, but to the point of
9 being suicidal. They tend to be socially isolated or
10 had a recent major social connection loss. And they
11 tend to be narcissistic, but specifically fame-seeking.

12 So I want to talk about that a little bit and
13 that's somewhat unique to them. Is their fame assured?
14 Well, let's take a look at a couple of studies.

15 Dahmen, she looked at 4,900 images from newspapers,
16 just front pages of newspapers all across the country
17 just for three days just related to three shootings.
18 And there were 4,900 images related to the mass
19 shooting.

20 More than a third of those were specifically
21 the shooter or the perpetrator. And furthermore, when
22 you compared how many shooters to like an individual

1 victim, the shooter was pictured 16 times more often
2 than any one individual victim. And their images were
3 also larger in size than other images that were shown.

4 Another study looked at just headlines, so the
5 verbal content related to mass shootings. In one
6 publication, 60 percent of the time it focused on the
7 shooter and not other aspects of the incident.

8 For a more personal example, the Orlando Pulse
9 Club shooter checked his Facebook and newsfeeds during
10 the event, wanting to see whether he had been mentioned
11 in the news yet.

12 So we're fairly certain that this is a major
13 motivator for this type of person and what's going on
14 with them. For some reason, I think they see fame as a
15 remedy to the suffering and their suicidal state of
16 mind. So there's a place where we can make a
17 difference.

18 Sometimes people ask what's the difference
19 between the copycat effect and the contagion effect.
20 And the copycat effect has to do with wanting to
21 specifically emulate a particular criminal or a
22 particular crime whereas media contagion is more

1 generalized than that.

2 And it seems to be more about planting the
3 seed that this is an option, that this is a way to cope
4 with or to feel better or gain something you want. But
5 they're both involved in what we're talking about
6 today.

7 Okay. What can we do? First off, I wanted to
8 thank the Department of Justice for releasing that
9 funding recently, particularly the comprehensive school
10 safety initiative. We really appreciate that.

11 I know that my colleagues and various others
12 are going to take advantage of that, as well as the
13 investigator-initiated research and evaluation on
14 firearms violence. So thank you for that.

15 And I want our number one I think point of
16 attack would be that we ask the media to immediately
17 adopt the don't name them campaign. Do not show the
18 shooter's face. Do not say their name. And do not go
19 into detail about their backgrounds.

20 Why? Because as the previous panel talked
21 about, and they didn't completely mention one of the
22 pushes towards violence is identification. Imitation,

1 but we know that the most powerful models for why
2 people behave violently are the ones that they're
3 closest to or that they identify with the most.

4 So when the media goes into great detail about
5 their backgrounds, that they were bullied or the weapon
6 choices, things like that, then they have someone to
7 identify with. We need to remove that.

8 Secondly, Deputy Secretary Hargan, I would
9 like the CDC to reconvene a working group on this topic
10 of media contagion the way that suicide contagion was
11 evaluated in 1994. The media did adopt those
12 guidelines that the CDC recommended. So I'm hoping
13 that that can happen and I'm happy to help with that.

14 SEC. DEVOS: Dr. Johnston?

15 DR. JOHNSTON: Yes?

16 SEC. DEVOS: Your time is up.

17 DR. JOHNSTON: Thank you.

18 SEC. DEVOS: I'm sorry.

19 DR. JOHNSTON: I'll make my last comment. So
20 Secretary DeVos, thank you so much for what you're
21 doing. The schools need mental health threat
22 assessment teams. And I would give you two good

1 examples, the Los Angeles County School District --
2 Unified School District has had success for eight
3 years, zero mass shootings because they have an
4 excellent model of that, as well as the Long Island,
5 New York school district who works with Dr. Weisbrot,
6 prevented hundreds of shootings with their follow-up
7 procedures.

8 Train staff and students to look for leakage.
9 Almost all shooters do leak their intent and act on
10 that immediately, as well as suicidal ideation.

11 And lastly, Deputy Assistant (sic) Grady,
12 please address issues with firearms. I know that
13 you're looking into that later this summer. We've
14 heard this panel will look into that. So thank you for
15 that.

16 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you so much, Dr. Johnston.
17 Next, we turn to Ben Fernandez, who is chair of the
18 National Association of School Psychologists school
19 safety and crisis response committee. Welcome, Mr.
20 Fernandez.

21 MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you. Good afternoon,
22 members of the commission. Thank you for inviting me

1 to speak on behalf of the National Association of
2 School Psychologists regarding the effects of media
3 coverage of mass shootings and the role that the media
4 can play in helping to inform the public and prevent
5 further violence.

6 As you said, my name is Ben Fernandez. I'm a
7 school psychologist and also the chair of the school
8 safety crisis response committee.

9 Modern media enables access to current events,
10 including highly traumatic events, in real time and in
11 multiple formats. The viral, interactive and more
12 intimate nature of media, particularly social media,
13 can make these events feel closer to home and much more
14 personal.

15 This prevents -- or excuse me, this presents
16 opportunities to increase the attention to school
17 safety, but at the same time perpetuates the belief
18 that schools are dangerous places, when in fact they
19 are safe.

20 I'd like to focus on three primary points in
21 my time today and I also refer you to my written
22 statement for more detail. My first point being that

1 by balancing physical and psychological safety, schools
2 are safe. School policies and practices are most
3 critical to this, but the media also plays a role in
4 contributing to the perception of safety by how they
5 shape the overall understanding of specific crisis
6 events.

7 Mass school shootings are horrific and totally
8 unacceptable and we need to pay attention to them. But
9 they are not the norm. Yet too often coverage of mass
10 shootings has perpetuated the misperception that
11 schools are dangerous.

12 Schools are overwhelmingly safe places and
13 since the 1990s, the overall trend is that they're
14 becoming safer, despite the unusual number of mass
15 shootings this year.

16 I'm reminded of my own daughter's fear after
17 the Parkland shooting based on information she saw on
18 social media, rumors in her school and what she saw on
19 the news. She was very concerned about the safety of
20 her own school.

21 You know, fortunately she came to me seeking
22 guidance on what was really going on. And after honest

1 conversation and pointing out the physical and
2 psychological safety approaches and efforts of her
3 school, she began to understand, you know, the
4 situation, which then calmed her fears.

5 It's important that the media convey factual
6 information about the reality of day-to-day safety
7 because coverage can infuse all our perceptions.

8 Importantly, national, state and local leaders
9 have a responsibility to convey the facts, reinforce
10 best practices and balance reactions to specific events
11 with assurances that schools are amongst the safest for
12 our children to be. Everything you do and other
13 leaders say contributes to the news cycle.

14 My second being is that best practices for
15 media coverage of traumatic events must include the
16 commitment to do no harm.

17 School psychologists operate by the principle
18 of do no harm in our daily practice. NASP believes
19 that the media should apply these principles when
20 covering incidents of school violence.

21 Responsible media coverage can benefit the
22 community, prevent harm and aid in recovery. I want to

1 stress that reporting school safety incidents is
2 important. People need to know the facts and have an
3 understanding of response and recovery efforts.

4 The media can play a critical role in
5 assisting with the crisis recovery if they follow best
6 practice reporting. The goal is not to censor or limit
7 the media but rather provide guidance on what is
8 required to do no harm.

9 Doing no harm includes understanding how
10 actions, images, video and words may contribute to the
11 difficulties of crisis survivors and victims and
12 possibly trigger others who are at risk of harming
13 themselves and others.

14 Unfortunately, certain media coverage
15 practices can cause harm, perpetuate fear and hamper
16 recover. Irresponsible media coverage includes
17 speculative reporting in the absence of verified
18 information, overdramatizing how information is
19 conveyed.

20 Asking students to relive the crisis or
21 recount their own experience immediately after exposure
22 to crisis by asking them questions like what were you

1 thinking when you saw your classmate shot in the back.

2 And then, focusing intensely on the perpetrator.

3 Such practices increase anxiety, fear and
4 increase perceptions of threat, create the potential
5 for further impact to crisis victims and possibly
6 triggering troubled youth, as well as perpetuate
7 misperceptions of appropriate coping and recovery.

8 As Dr. Johnston noted, many of these issues
9 related to the coverage of mass violence also apply to
10 suicide. And I encourage you to keep this in mind
11 because schools are far more likely to be dealing with
12 a suicide risk than a threat of a violent attack.

13 And for more information about avoiding
14 coverage that can cause harm, I recommend the five for
15 five challenge, reporting on suicide matters video on
16 YouTube created by Fairfax County, Virginia.

17 The good news is that there are responsible
18 media practices that can prevent harm and promote
19 positive messaging.

20 Some include refraining from providing
21 intensive and graphic details of an incident, avoiding
22 focusing on the method, plans, photos, videos, writing,

1 manifestos and even images and likenesses of the
2 perpetrator, focusing on students, staff and families
3 who are positively and adaptively coping and avoiding
4 overdramatizing crisis impact.

5 And seeking out experts and facts related to
6 school safety and crisis intervention services to
7 provide factual and best practice recovery information
8 and then emphasizing that schools are safe and
9 reporting on appropriate evidence-based measures
10 schools are taking to make schools even safer.

11 My third point this afternoon is that school
12 leaders can play a role in how media coverage will
13 contribute to useful public understanding or may
14 contribute to confusion or harm.

15 Collaboration with other agencies such as law
16 enforcement, community health, mental health
17 departments and others as well as the media can help
18 guide recovery after a significant event such as mass
19 violence.

20 For school leaders, it's important to develop
21 a plan on how to communicate with the media that helps
22 accomplish this goal. Such a plan should consider

1 communication practices before, during and after an
2 incident and may include a process for determining who
3 is responsible for communication, when updates will be
4 given, how information will be attained, verified and
5 then disseminated and then what are expectations for
6 the media at schools.

7 It also includes using verified factual
8 information to quickly communicate with the school
9 community and address rumors and misinformation.

10 Providing regular, accurate updates regarding
11 the crisis situation and then also engaging the school
12 community by communicating information about public
13 services, planned memorial events and resources for
14 recovery.

15 As you consider recommendations about school
16 safety and specifically the role of media, I would like
17 to offer some -- the following recommendations.

18 Federal leadership in this area is critical.
19 Collectively we can uphold the First Amendment and help
20 schools understand best practices around media
21 engagement to the press and social media outlets about
22 responsible media coverage of violent school events.

1 The Federal Commission on School Safety could
2 assist in disseminating guidance, much like the NASP
3 document entitled "Responsible Media Coverage of Crisis
4 Events Involving Children and Youth" that clearly
5 articulates best practices in covering school crisis
6 events.

7 Media in all forms can play a valuable role in
8 how information about school crises are communicated.
9 While irresponsible reporting can cause harm,
10 responsible reporting can help communities heal.

11 I want to stress that once again NASP does not
12 support limiting or controlling media. However, we
13 support meaningful dialog to support best practice
14 reporting as well as best practice media engagement for
15 schools.

16 We all play a role in supporting school
17 safety. And when we speak, the media listens. We're a
18 part of the news cycle and we have a responsibility to
19 promote accurate, evidence-based information that
20 supports the wellbeing of all students and communities.

21 Thank you and I'm happy to answer questions
22 and NASP is happy to serve as a resource.

1 Q&A DISCUSSION

2 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you, Mr. Fernandez. And
3 thank you, Dr. Johnston. I'm cognizant of our time.
4 So I'm going to ask if any of my colleagues have one
5 burning question to pose to this duo.

6 MS. GRADY: I do have a quick question
7 relative to the -- you were talking about the media
8 contagion effect. You mentioned the time factor
9 associated with tweets and tweets that follow.

10 Is that more likely to occur regionally or
11 nationally? My question I guess is, is it more
12 isolated to the community that was most impacted or was
13 it really a national effect that you saw.

14 DR. JOHNSTON: So the studies that have looked
15 at national news media and just looking at whether
16 incidents cluster in time indicate that it's within two
17 weeks, around that time, with school shootings up to
18 about 30 days even.

19 The study that looked just at social media,
20 that was regionally based. So the effect seems to be
21 both. We know, for example, with the Parkland
22 shootings, the LA County School District had a rise of

1 like 63 threats compared to the normal 20 that they
2 have. So it's definitely a national effect as well as
3 local and regional.

4 SEC. DEVOS: Again, thank you both very much
5 for being here, for your presentation. And we have
6 really run out of our time this afternoon
7 unfortunately.

8 So I'm going to ask my colleagues if they have
9 any closing comments to make before we do conclude.

10 CLOSING REMARKS

11 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: I want to just thank
12 you. This is a very, very interesting discussion and
13 gave us some insight that I had not had and maybe that
14 can inform our discussions and policy decisions.

15 MS. GRADY: I want to thank all of the
16 panelists, particularly having the differing
17 perspectives on issues or approaching the topic from
18 different perspectives is really valuable as we look at
19 the possible solutions to a very challenging situation.
20 So I just want to thank all of you all for your
21 insights.

22 MR. HARGAN: Yeah. Again, thank you all, and

1 particularly thank you, Secretary DeVos and everyone
2 for assembling such a great set of experts here today.
3 And I think we've heard a great variety of perspectives
4 here on what's a very important topic for us to
5 address. The President has asked Secretary DeVos to
6 helm on this front. So appreciate the perspective. I
7 think we've learned a lot here today. Thank you.

8 SEC. DEVOS: Thank you all very much. And on
9 behalf of the Federal Commission on School Safety, I'd
10 like to convey our sincere gratitude to all of today's
11 participants.

12 We've really appreciated hearing your
13 insights. I know you've also all submitted some
14 written testimony. And I think there will be
15 opportunity for some casual conversation afterwards for
16 those who can stay behind.

17 I also want to thank my fellow commissioners
18 and their representatives for being here today and for
19 their continued work.

20 You can find more information on today's
21 hearing, including a video, transcript and information
22 on future events at ed.gov/school-safety and we

1 encourage members of the public to submit their own
2 ideas for solutions to safety@ed.gov. And again, thank
3 you all for being here today. We are concluded.

4

5 (Whereupon, at 3:35 p.m., the meeting was
6 concluded.)

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NATALIA THOMAS

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I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

June 25, 2018

DATE

Benjamin Graham

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