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

"Proactively Protecting Our Schools"

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Indian Treaty Room
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4 Betsy DeVos, Secretary

5 U.S. Department of Education

6 Kirstjen Nielsen, Secretary

7 U.S. Department of Homeland Security

8 Jeff Sessions, Attorney General

9 U.S. Department of Justice

10

11 P A N E L I S T S

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13 President, National Association of School Resource
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15 Mo Canady

16 Executive Director, National Association of School
17 Resource Officers

18 Clarence Cox, III

19 President, National Organization of Black Law
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P A N E L I S T S

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Principal, Hoover High School, Hoover, Alabama

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COMMISSIONERS' OPENING REMARKS

3 SEC. DEVOS: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd
4 like to welcome you to this Federal Commission on
5 School Safety meeting.

6 This is our third formal commission meeting.
7 In late June, we met and considered the impact of
8 cyberbullying and youth consumption of violent
9 entertainment upon students, as well as the effects of
10 media coverage of mass shootings.

11 In early July, we met to learn about
12 opportunities to improve access to mental health
13 treatment, the effectiveness and appropriateness of
14 psychotropic medication and student privacy.

15 Today, our meeting will feature three panels
16 of experts who will present information on proactively
17 protecting our schools. More on that soon from
18 Attorney General Sessions.

19 As I've noted in the past, the commission was
20 established by President Trump in March of this year in
21 response to the tragedy at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas
22 High School in Parkland, Florida.

1 Unfortunately, we are all aware that that was
2 not an isolated incident. And so, we continue to
3 identify and study what's already working in local
4 communities across the nation.

5 We know there's no "one size fits all"
6 approach, no "one size fits all" plan when it comes to
7 school safety. Every school and every community is
8 different.

9 That's why the commission will be making
10 recommendations, not issuing mandates. This important
11 work continues today with our expert panels.

12 I look forward to hearing from each of our
13 speakers, and would now like to turn the meeting over
14 to my fellow commissioner, Attorney General Sessions.

15 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you very much,
16 Secretary DeVos, for chairing this commission and
17 leading us through this process and to Secretary Azar
18 and Secretary Nielsen for being here today to discuss
19 the important topic of proactively protecting our
20 schools.

21 Secretary DeVos is committed to this project
22 and gives her best effort every single day to focus on

1 safety for our students, but also to maximize their
2 learning that occurs in our schools every day. So I'm
3 glad to be here with all of our panelists as we meet to
4 continue our discussion on the critical issue of our
5 nation today, protecting our nation's schools and its
6 children.

7 The fundamental duty of government is to keep
8 its people safe. And that includes our children and
9 our most precious citizens. President Trump is firmly
10 committed to fulfilling that duty. He's made it a top
11 priority of his administration.

12 We are acting on his direction and request.
13 And he wants to make sure that no child should live in
14 fear when they go to school. And he knows that to make
15 that happen, we have to listen to the women and men
16 who've committed their lives to achieving this goal,
17 real people at the front lines.

18 So today we will focus on law enforcement, its
19 role in school safety. I'm grateful to the women and
20 men of law enforcement who are with us today, as well
21 as all those others that have dedicated their careers
22 to working with our youth.

1 Through their decades of service, they have
2 gained experience and expertise and judgment that is
3 invaluable to any effort to reduce violence and crime
4 in our schools. President Trump understands the
5 important role each of you have and that's why the
6 federal government seeks to invest more in you.

7 With regard to law enforcement, every year the
8 Department of Justice helps hire hundreds of police
9 officers across America. Under the president, we are
10 channeling this grant funding to cities, states and
11 tribes that want to hire school resource officers.

12 In addition, last month, just before I met
13 with Mo Canady and the National Association of School
14 Resource Officers, I announced the Department of
15 Justice's first grants under the Stop School Violence
16 Act, which President Trump signed into law.

17 Under this new law, the Department of Justice
18 will provide \$50 million to train teachers on best
19 practices to stop school violence and to develop a
20 threat reporting system.

21 Working with the Department of Education,
22 these grants will go a long way toward giving the young

1 people and their parents that we all serve both safety
2 and peace of mind.

3 I have also dedicated another \$25 million for
4 our school safety efforts across the country for better
5 training and for technology to improve emergency
6 reporting. I believe that this funding will make our
7 school safety efforts more effective and that will make
8 the children of this country safer.

9 Most importantly, we must empower all of you
10 to be able to do your job of protecting our children.
11 We must allow you to know all the information possible,
12 to make the essential decisions, whether from a
13 disciplinary, counseling, mental health or law
14 enforcement perspective to keep our children safe.

15 You must be able to work together without your
16 hands being tied, plain and simple. I am concerned
17 that we are no properly serving the interests of our
18 youth in this country. Perhaps we have too many siloes
19 in this system.

20 I look forward to hearing from you and
21 engaging on these issues. Thank you all for being
22 here. Thank you for committing your talents to the

1 noble work of protecting the young men and women who
2 are our country's future. I look forward to what I
3 know will be a productive discussion on how we can do
4 that work better. Thank you. And Secretary Azar, I'd
5 be glad to hear your opening comments.

6 SEC. AZAR: Thank you, Attorney General
7 Sessions. And good afternoon, fellow commissioners.

8 I'm very much looking forward to hearing from
9 the experts that have been gathered today to speak
10 about the importance of information-sharing with law
11 enforcement, the value of school resource officers and
12 best practices in law enforcement.

13 Clearly it's ideal to intervene on challenges
14 in our schools early, before issues of safety ever
15 arise in the first place. Already this commission has
16 seen several good working examples of schools and
17 programs that cultivate supportive and connected
18 environments for students.

19 We know that a strong sense of belonging and
20 community is an important component of healthy, safe
21 and nurturing schools. And we know that developing and
22 maintaining these kinds of school environments can

1 result in reports of less disruptive behavior, less
2 violence and less need for out-of-school discipline and
3 placement.

4 We've learned that school resource officers
5 and relationships with local law enforcement can be an
6 invaluable part of a healthy, connected community.

7 We've also learned that the relationships
8 between schools and law enforcement can be influenced
9 by community experiences with law enforcement in
10 general and that this can mean that the development of
11 positive relationships in this area is harder in some
12 school environments than in others.

13 Today, we're very much looking forward to
14 learning further details regarding best practices in
15 this area. We have a very important job to do and we
16 take this job very seriously. We owe it to our
17 nation's children to provide a safe and secure setting
18 for them to learn every day.

19 Your remarks today will be included in the
20 commission report which will provide meaningful and
21 actionable recommendations on protecting our schools.
22 Thank you very much.

1 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Secretary
2 Azar and the Department of Health and Human Services is
3 an extraordinary part of this effort and focuses on the
4 welfare of children in so many different areas.

5 Now, we'll hear from Secretary Nielsen. She's
6 the secretary of health and human -- homeland security.
7 I was with her top people this morning in Boston who
8 did a great job on an important case.

9 But Secretary Nielsen has also been an active
10 member of this commission, and we're glad to hear from
11 you now.

12 SEC. NIELSEN: Thank you. So as always, I
13 want to just begin by thanking Secretary DeVos for
14 bringing us all together. And I want to thank the
15 attorney general for the distinguished panel. Thank
16 you all for being here.

17 We look forward to learning from you,
18 listening to you and please know this is what I hope to
19 be the first of our interactions as we continue to work
20 towards how to take care of our children. So thank you
21 for being here.

22 I really want to just quickly run through a

1 couple of things from the DHS perspective on the topics
2 today to just give you an idea of how I think we can
3 interact moving forward.

4 On information-sharing, as we all know, we do
5 see studies that there is very often a behavior that is
6 indicative of an issue prior to an event. So figuring
7 out what information we can share and how to share it
8 becomes very important. We'll talk about that today.

9 At DHS, we have the "see something, say
10 something" campaign. We've worked with many of your
11 school associations at state and local levels to help
12 develop similar plans, similar programs.

13 We also -- I directed that we undertake a
14 review of our suspicious activity reporting protocols
15 for the department after Parkland. So what I hope
16 there is whenever we receive any suspicious behavior,
17 should we receive it at DHS, that we have a way to get
18 it right back to you in a way that is meaningful.

19 I also want to make sure, and will ask
20 questions about privacy and civil liberties. We always
21 have to keep those in mind when we're sharing
22 information with law enforcement. We do that every day

1 at DHS. There's a way to do that and we'd be happy to
2 share our protocols.

3 On school resource officers, I love this idea.
4 It's such a vital link between the student body,
5 between administrators, management, the community. I
6 welcome and look forward to learning more about this
7 guiding program that we see here.

8 We at DHS offer training through our Federal
9 Law Enforcement Training Center and the Federal
10 Emergency Management Agency. So if any of that
11 training is helpful, we're happy to find different ways
12 to provide it and do it on-location virtually through
13 Web applications, other sources at Ready.gov.

14 But it's everything from active shooter to
15 tactical and methods of training in a casualty event.
16 So look forward to working with you on that.

17 And on best practices, we -- you know, I just
18 want to stress the importance of a comprehensive
19 prevention plan. That really goes to your point,
20 Attorney General, of the siloes. We want to make sure
21 that all parts of the community are included in the
22 plan.

1 We find in any sort of emergency that we deal
2 with, that's always the most effective process to do
3 that. I note in your training standards that you
4 specify crisis planning and active threat response.
5 And these are two areas that we focus a lot at DHS. So
6 happy to talk more about that.

7 And finally, our United States Secret Service,
8 which is little known, is actually very involved in
9 this topic post-Columbine. So they continue to review
10 best practices and threats emanating from school
11 systems.

12 They've just released the "Enhancing School
13 Safety Using Threat Assessment Model Operational Guide"
14 and we look forward to hearing from you about that and
15 how we can tailor that to school communities. So thank
16 you again for pulling this all together. Thank you for
17 being here, and we look forward to hearing from you.

18 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Secretary
19 Nielsen. So we'll be hearing from two panels. And
20 then, we will ask the witnesses on both panels to
21 entertain questions. If I could please ask my fellow
22 commissioners to hold their questions for this panel

1 until the question-and-answer session of panel two,
2 we'll do it both together.

3 Our first panel is on "Improving School Safety
4 Through Information-sharing and Accountability". And
5 with us today is Francisco Negrón, Jr., the chief legal
6 officer at the National School Boards Association. I
7 know they keep you busy. There's a few legal questions
8 that come up through that, no doubt. And you're a
9 leading advocate for public schools.

10 Joining him on the panel is Judy Kidd,
11 president of the Classroom Teachers association of
12 North Carolina and a science teacher in North Carolina
13 for 27 years. Thank you both for being here to share
14 your experience. And Mr. Negrón, would you like to
15 begin?

16 PANEL 1 PRESENTATION: IMPROVING SCHOOL SAFETY THROUGH
17 INFORMATION-SHARING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

18 MR. NEGRÓN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Attorney
19 General. Good afternoon, commissioners, and thank you
20 for inviting the National School Boards Association to
21 offer comments on improving school safety and
22 information-sharing. NSBA, though our member state

1 associations of school boards, represents the nation's
2 95,000 school board members serving more than 50
3 million public school students.

4 So part of the mission of educating youngsters
5 is ensuring that learning can happen in optimal
6 learning environments. For this reason, school boards
7 enact and implement, as you know, written policies that
8 set rigorous standards for student conduct.

9 Through these policies, which are generally
10 found in our student handbooks, school districts
11 establish expectations for respectful behavior and set
12 up practices and procedures for handling violations.

13 School boards across America are committed to
14 the elimination of violence and disruptive behavior at
15 school, at school-sponsored events and while traveling
16 to and from school.

17 And such behavior takes many forms, as we all
18 know, anywhere from physical violence to bullying or
19 disrespecting fellow students and school personnel,
20 harassment and, as mentioned by Secretary Azar, they
21 can vary significantly by community and context.

22 So NSBA believes that it is important for

1 school boards to continue to analyze student discipline
2 data so that we can avail ourselves of proven
3 intervention and prevention approaches to maximize the
4 opportunities for all students to have a safe and
5 successful in-school experience.

6 And to the extent that school safety is not
7 jeopardized, we encourage school leaders to consider
8 out-of-school disciplinary practices as a last resort
9 and to address behavioral issues through strategies
10 such as restorative practices and positive behavioral
11 intervention systems.

12 But ultimately decisions about student
13 discipline are pedagogical. They're matters of school
14 concern, entitling school leaders to the kind of
15 deference for their educational judgment which the
16 courts have repeatedly acknowledged.

17 So in considering matters of student
18 discipline, particularly as it relates to instances of
19 individual behavior, unrelated to instances of mass
20 violence, for instance, the federal government should
21 follow suit and equally defer to local education
22 experts.

1 Many schools ought to resolve events like
2 individual altercations, whether by actions or words,
3 at the lowest and most direct level of intervention
4 through internal school district practices and
5 procedures that address conflict within the educational
6 framework, informed by our educational expertise rather
7 than through automatic referrals to law enforcement.

8 But there are instances such as those
9 involving the potential for mass violence, that can
10 require a broader, more comprehensive approach. So
11 NSBA believes that there is a federal role in providing
12 greater and sustained resources for locally determined
13 programs that are critical to school safety.

14 These include school resource officers, school
15 counseling, emergency preparedness and response
16 training, interagency coordination and comprehensive
17 resource guides on available federal assistance.

18 That's why we support greater and sustained
19 federal resources that expand access to mental health
20 services and support comprehensive wraparound services
21 to schools that include a range of community resources
22 to address safety and intervention.

1 Critical to this interagency coordination is
2 the need for school officials to be able to share
3 information with law enforcement, as Mr. Attorney
4 General has mentioned, and the like with mental health
5 providers that can be used to prevent mass violence
6 like school shootings through referrals for services
7 and possible intervention where necessary.

8 When schools are actively engaged in the
9 wellbeing of their students and when local experts can
10 exchange information about potential mental health or
11 psychosocial needs as well as rising threats to and
12 from students, schools and their communities can be
13 better poised to intervene before mass violence
14 happens.

15 That's why NSBA believes that prevention,
16 preparedness, mitigation and emergency response and
17 recovery plans are critical to protecting the safety
18 and health of students.

19 These plans should be developed and maintained
20 in coordination with our appropriate local, state and
21 federal agencies, including everything from public
22 health to police and fire departments, transit

1 authorities and other agencies.

2 Collaboration and communication with local law
3 enforcement agencies is an essential part of these
4 efforts, Commissioners. And that's why school boards
5 would benefit from eliminating the barriers that hinder
6 the collaboration of agencies providing services to
7 children.

8 Local educators know and care about their
9 students and their school communities. They know the
10 school climate, the community concerns, the history of
11 student interactions and even many of their needs. And
12 so, they are in a unique position to share information
13 when necessary to maintain a safe school environment.

14 To that end, I will advise the commission that
15 the National School Boards Association will be
16 publishing a guide on school safety, a comprehensive
17 guide for school board leaders designing policies that
18 address these areas and basically direct school boards
19 on where they need to look to put these in place. And
20 we'll be happy to share what with the commission as it
21 prepares its final report.

22 We appreciate the commission's attention to

1 matters of school safety. Thank you for seeking input
2 from the National School Boards Association in this
3 crucial conversation. We look forward to assisting the
4 commission in its future work. Thank you.

5 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Mr. Negrón.
6 And for the classroom teachers, Ms. Kidd, we're glad to
7 hear from you at this time.

8 MS. KIDD: Thank you, sir. And thank you for
9 making school safety and student success a priority of
10 your day and for this administration. Thank you for
11 being part of making America great again. And
12 hopefully by the end of this short presentation, we
13 will together partner to make our schools great again
14 as well.

15 I come to you humble to represent the
16 opportunities for students across this -- across --
17 through multiple viewpoints. I am an educator. I am a
18 caring and invested taxpayer. I am a mother. I'm a
19 grandmother. I am an educational advocate and a
20 lobbyist. I'm president of the Classroom Teachers of
21 North Carolina. And I am a student who experienced
22 success in education that far too many of our current

1 students will never have because of the needs we can
2 start addressing today.

3 In speaking with thousands of educators and
4 making observations myself, there are three major needs
5 that we must address as a country if we are to make
6 America's schools great again.

7 The first need in our schools is to restore
8 success. We must as a nation define what education is.
9 What is the purpose? Why do we have students in our
10 public schools? The purpose is actually quite simple,
11 and most school systems even use the same language.

12 The purpose is to graduate contributing,
13 successful members of society. We want students to
14 leave our schools ready to become productive adults who
15 pay taxes, work hard and we measure success by
16 graduating rates, at least on the federal level.

17 Does walking across a platform to receive a
18 diploma actually reflect that you are ready to become
19 the type of contributing citizen we desire? At a local
20 Charlotte, North Carolina school this year, 98 percent
21 of the seniors walked across the platform to the sounds
22 of "Pomp and Circumstance". They received their

1 diploma. Yet, that same group of seniors, when tested
2 earlier this year, scored at 48 percent being college-
3 and career-ready, per federal testing parameters. How
4 is this possible?

5 My friends in education, we must restore
6 success. Federal and state dollars should not be
7 attached to graduation rates that fail to measure the
8 real preparedness of our students. A system based on
9 graduation rates supports fabricated outcomes without
10 incentivizing to validate success in future endeavors.

11 Success should be defined instead as readiness
12 for that specific student to face tomorrow with hope
13 and equipped with the skills necessary to move forward.

14 To make America's schools great again, we must
15 restore success by measuring our students' successes
16 and our schools in a better way, a process where the
17 focus becomes the preparedness of each student entering
18 the workforce prepared to contribute and not a measure
19 of those who receive participation certificates on
20 graduation day.

21 This brings up a second great need to make our
22 schools great again. We must restore personalized

1 education. Call it differentiation, individual
2 education plan, one-to-one. Whatever you call it, we
3 must get back to creative pathways for each student
4 instead of standardized programs, standardized tests
5 and standardized curriculums.

6 In our present system, by our practice, we
7 tell thousands of students every single day that we, as
8 a society, don't care about them, that they are not
9 wanted, that they're worthless.

10 We do this every day in education because we
11 are forcing students that don't fit standardized
12 systems into the -- into a system giving them no other
13 option. We place students who enter our country not
14 able to read or write in their own language by
15 chronological age in classes that they are taught in a
16 language that is foreign to them.

17 Not only is it unfair to the students, but it
18 is unfair to the teacher who is evaluated based on the
19 individual performance of their students. What about
20 the student who isn't college-bound or academically
21 inclined? What about the student who wants to be a
22 blue collar worker? What about the student who wants

1 to come to school each day knowing what their future
2 holds?

3 We must break this vicious defeatism cycle of
4 cookie cutter education. It's time for us to restore
5 personalized education by adding vocational education
6 options into our system to meet students where they
7 are.

8 We need students who do not desire college to
9 be successfully prepared to enter the workforce. We
10 need as a nation to have well-qualified blue collar
11 workers. We need a pathway from standardization and
12 into personalization.

13 To make America's schools great again, we must
14 restore personalized education that only comes from
15 knowing the individual dreams, desires and capabilities
16 of our students, allowing them to cater their education
17 to achieve their goals so we can graduate productive
18 and contributing members of society.

19 Tied closely to these needs to restore success
20 and to restore personalized education, we must restore
21 behavioral expectations. Schools today are
22 experiencing behavioral issues that continuously

1 disrupt instruction while administrators are told in
2 order to receive full federal or state funding,
3 suspension rates, both in and out of school, must be
4 reduced, regardless of the offense.

5 How can our educators be required to prepare
6 students to be productive and contributing members of
7 society if the classroom atmosphere is disruptive and
8 chaotic because students creating the issues go largely
9 unpunished or at least uncorrected?

10 Daily fights, concealed weapons and teachers
11 assaulted are being ignored to reduce the number of
12 incidents reported. This is unacceptable. I do
13 believe if we work -- if we today work hard to restore
14 success and personalized education, a huge reduction in
15 student outbursts will occur.

16 When a person feels they are being valued,
17 they tend to make better choices. That being said,
18 there will always be a percentage of our students that
19 simply need strong boundaries that are strictly
20 enforced.

21 This isn't to address the negative behavior
22 but to provide a better and more positive education

1 environment for all students. It must be said that
2 students are profiling themselves, and as a result,
3 they are performing so that they can be removed from an
4 educational environment that they perceive does not
5 suit their needs. We need to correct this for them.

6 To make America's schools great again, we must
7 give local schools the authority and permission to
8 enforce written behavioral policy guidelines without
9 fear of funding loss or reduction of school grades.

10 This is of course -- could begin with revoking
11 the executive order often referred to as the dear
12 colleague letter of January the 8th, 2014 and will
13 continue with a new policy that encourages and
14 strengthens positive behavior for our students.

15 Unfortunately, we still need to strengthen the
16 communication between the courts of the land and the
17 schoolhouse to better serve the needs of the students
18 who participate in both of those arenas.

19 The schools cannot be the repository of some
20 student criminals. There are many examples that I can
21 provide to help with your understanding of this topic,
22 if you'd like.

1 I want to thank you for listening today, not
2 just with your ears, but with your heart as well.
3 America is becoming great again under your leadership
4 and we can make our schools great again in this process
5 as well.

6 Let's not waste any time, but today commit to
7 restore success in education by defining what it is and
8 appropriately measuring its outcomes. Let us restore
9 personalized education for students so not one feels
10 undervalued, unimportant or lost.

11 Let us restore behavioral expectations so our
12 teachers are supported and administrators are free to
13 create positive, productive environments and our
14 students know the boundaries for achieving success as
15 they grow into productive, contributing members of
16 society.

17 Will you join me? Let's restore our schools.
18 Let's make America's schools as great as this nation.
19 Thank you. God bless you and God bless America.

20 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Ms. Kidd. So
21 now, I'd like to introduce our second panel. The
22 experts on this panel will provide their perspectives

1 on the value of school resource officers.

2 With us today is Don Bridges, the president of
3 the National Association of School Resource Officers.

4 Good to have you with us. Officer Bridges served as a
5 Baltimore County police officer for 25 years and as the
6 school resource officer at Franklin High for 16 years.

7 He is joined on the panel by Rudy Perez, a 16-
8 year veteran of the Los Angeles School Police
9 Department. Nice to have you. Detective Perez is also
10 a region director for the National Association of
11 School Resource Officers and the vice president of the
12 Los Angeles School Police Officers Association.

13 Also with us today is Don Hulin, the principal
14 of Hoover High School in Hoover, Alabama, the largest
15 and most diverse school system in Alabama. I was there
16 when the school opened, the day it opened, by chance.
17 It's a fabulous facility, no doubt about it.

18 MR. HULIN: Thank you.

19 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Got a pretty good
20 football team.

21 MR. HULIN: Not bad.

22 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: It's been well-

1 recognized. Mr. Hulin has 32 years of service in
2 public schools in both Alabama and Louisiana.

3 Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. Mr.
4 Bridges, would you like to begin?

5 PANEL 2 PRESENTATION: THE VALUE OF SCHOOL RESOURCE
6 OFFICERS

7 MR. BRIDGES: Yes, sir. Good afternoon,
8 Commissioners. It is indeed an honor to speak before
9 such an accomplished body. And I'll tell you, it
10 actually means a lot being an SRO and having the
11 opportunity to come here and to deliver that message.

12 The assignment of a school resource officer,
13 commonly known as SRO, is a concept that dates back to
14 the 1950s. More than 60 years later, the goal of the
15 program remains the same: to bridge the gap between
16 police and youth.

17 It is understandable that a greater emphasis
18 has been placed on safety as a result of the latest
19 acts of violence that have occurred in schools across
20 the country. I'm here to tell you that school resource
21 officers serve as the first line of defense in
22 thousands of schools across the nation.

1 They serve as partners of educators and are
2 law-related instructors, teaching students the law and
3 the importance of obeying it. We teach inside the
4 classroom, walk the hallways and patrol the grounds.
5 Students see us as protectors and confidantes whom they
6 trust because we build relationships with them day in
7 and day out.

8 Educators and administrators rely on us to
9 provide staff training, guidance on law-related matters
10 and the enforcement of law when necessary. SROs serve
11 to develop positive relationships with students and the
12 school community. These officers are the connection
13 between the police department and the school system.

14 The SRO is a positive role model and provides
15 an opportunity for students to interact with police
16 officers in a friendly nonthreatening manner and
17 environment. In many cases, it is the first ever
18 interaction that kids have with police officers.

19 We build relationships -- we build
20 relationships with students through these. They help
21 us keep the school safe by informing us of potential
22 acts of violence before they occur. SROs deal with

1 issues in the schoolhouse, whether they are student
2 fights, gang activity, threats or self-harm or our
3 worst-case scenarios.

4 I would like to tell you about an incident
5 that happened to me in the 1990s when the Baltimore
6 County SRO program was just beginning. A young student
7 came to me with information that would change the lives
8 of several families. She went to the main office and
9 asked if she could speak with me.

10 In that conversation with that very distraught
11 student, I learned that on the previous evening, she
12 was talking to her boyfriend on the phone. And during
13 that call, her boyfriend shared that when he went to
14 get food from the family freezer, he saw a human foot.

15 The information that student provided led to
16 my police department solving a homicide -- solving a
17 domestic-related homicide. I tell you that to
18 illustrate the unique role that SROs play in the
19 community.

20 We are law enforcement officers who develop
21 trust relationships with thousands of kids across the
22 country and, in so doing, help solve crimes or far, far

1 better, prevent them. Students learn to trust us as
2 their advisors with problems and concerns that they
3 don't know how to handle or may not feel comfortable
4 sharing with their peers, parents or teachers.

5 Oftentimes, we present issues to principals
6 and collaborate with them to determine the best way to
7 resolve student problems. We keep staff informed of
8 safety trends and changes in the law that may impact
9 schools in their communities.

10 We share school-related concerns with police
11 commanders to work together in solving community
12 issues. The presence of an SRO in schools is designed
13 to make everyone feel safe.

14 Almost 20 years as an SRO, I recommend that
15 when school districts, police or sheriff's departments
16 make a decision to implement school resource officer
17 programs, they follow proven best practices as we did
18 in Baltimore County.

19 There must be an understanding that this
20 concept is deeply rooted in the philosophy of community
21 policing. It is mission critical that before
22 implementing a successful program, a memorandum of

1 understanding is developed and agreed upon. The MOU,
2 as it's called, should define the role of the school
3 resource officer, as well as other stakeholders in the
4 program.

5 In Baltimore County, Maryland, the 25th
6 largest school district, we have had SROs for almost 20
7 years. During the last school year, the program
8 comprised of 64 SROs that were assigned to area
9 schools.

10 Our program was recognized by the National
11 Association of School Resource Officers as a model
12 program. As a result of the uptick in school-related
13 incidents, we will be starting in the next school year
14 an elementary school resource officer liaison program.

15 The goal is to create an officer-friendly
16 program geared toward providing police -- providing a
17 police presence in over 100 elementary schools across
18 our 610-mile country, something that the parents,
19 administrators and elected officials have wanted for
20 years.

21 The success of this amazing program is deeply
22 rooted in the training, selection and recruitment of

1 the right type of police officer who expresses a desire
2 to become an SRO. The job is not for anyone or any
3 police officer. There must be a deep commitment and a
4 desire to work with kids and the ability to collaborate
5 with civilians school administrators and educators.

6 In 2010, a survey was conducted in Baltimore
7 County by the Department of Research, Accountability
8 and Assessment and the result -- and the research
9 showed that 92 percent of our students advised that
10 they never skipped school because they were unsafe.

11 Sixty-two percent of the staff and 43 percent
12 of the students said that they felt that the presence
13 of an SRO was a deterrent to violence. Eighty-six
14 percent of administrators felt that the SROs served as
15 a resource.

16 Sixty-nine percent of the students advised
17 that they never felt intimidated by the presence of
18 their school resource officer. Ninety percent of
19 students and 96.5 percent of the staff reported feeling
20 either very safe or somewhat safe at school.

21 In the role that I've served for almost two
22 decades as Baltimore County's first school resource

1 officer, I have never forgotten what is at the heart of
2 what we do. I call it the promise and it is reflected
3 in the shield that we wear as we are committed to
4 putting ourselves in harm's way for the safety of our
5 children and the entire school community. We are there
6 to provide a secure environment so that those we serve
7 can reach their full potential.

8 In my many conversations with SROs throughout
9 the country, we often agree that the role of the SRO
10 has and continues to evolve.

11 However, we always remember the significance
12 of the position we hold as well as the impact we have
13 on our most precious natural resource, the young people
14 we are entrusted to protect and serve.

15 I wholeheartedly support and recommend the
16 school resource officer program as the best way to
17 protect America's children and keep our schoolhouses
18 safe. I thank you for listening.

19 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you very much, Mr.
20 Bridges. And detective Perez, we'd be glad to hear
21 from you.

22 MR. PEREZ: Thank you very much.

1 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: I guess from the
2 Atlantic to the Pacific. Los Angeles now we'll hear.

3 MR. PEREZ: I love it. Thank you so much.
4 I'm holding that line in California. I'm there. Thank
5 you so much for allowing us to be at the table,
6 allowing law enforcement to be at the table because
7 sometimes we're not on the menu. And you know, it's
8 one of those things where the conversation needs to
9 begin.

10 Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to
11 share my story, my American dream come true. My name
12 is detective Rudy Perez. I am a 16-year veteran of the
13 Los Angeles School Police Department.

14 I'd like to start by saying that the U.S.
15 dream machine works. This country offers hope and
16 opportunity and most of all safety. My story shows the
17 ability -- my story shows that people have the ability
18 to come here and become productive and contributing
19 members of this amazing country.

20 I immigrated from Guatemala when I was a
21 child. My mom and dad said it is not safe for us in
22 Guatemala because of prevailing gangs and violence and

1 rise of violence their country. We immigrated to the
2 United States and, through the process of hard work,
3 dedication of my mother and father, we became citizens
4 of this amazing country.

5 Living in government housing for 15 years was
6 not easy because of the intense gang violence and drug
7 usage in the area. Shots were fired regularly. There
8 was a temptation to join gangs surrounding us. For me,
9 school was very difficult. I was diagnosed with
10 dyslexia and learning disabilities. IEPs, kind of
11 stuff like that. Forgive me.

12 I didn't learn to read until the fifth grade
13 and the education was very hard for me and learning was
14 very difficult for me. Despite the fact we were
15 surrounded by negativity and violence, we were still
16 better off than our previous circumstance.

17 My mom always reminded us that there's a
18 difference between being poor in Guatemala and being
19 poor in the United States with resources. In the
20 United States, my mom would say you can call 9-1-1,
21 which was the first number I ever -- telephone number I
22 ever learned, and somebody will come.

1 In this country, it is -- in this country of
2 law and safety and people care for you and people care
3 for each other. As I focused my attention to pas high
4 school, I was still affected by the violence around me.

5 That's when Victor Del Rio, our school
6 resource officer, stepped into my life and had a very
7 stern conversation with me. He told me I was a likable
8 guy. But he was very concerned that I was skipping
9 class and hanging out with friends that could
10 negatively affect my long-term future.

11 At that moment, I chose to trust him and I
12 said I chose to trust him and his judgment, which led
13 Officer Del Rio to becoming my first mentor. His
14 guidance changed my life through the many one-on-one
15 conversations we walked -- through the many one-on-one
16 conversations, we walked through in-depth life
17 questions that helped me set my priorities.

18 When I was in elementary, law enforcement
19 officers were my heroes. But it was in high school
20 where one of the -- one of these officers became my
21 real friend and someone I could turn to. Because of
22 him, my parents' first encounter with law enforcement

1 was very positive. I saw Victor both as a warrior and
2 a guardian.

3 We experienced many lockdowns and shootings in
4 our schools and as he was always running towards the
5 danger. He was a true, true -- and is a true hero. I
6 will never forget the day he pulled me aside and found
7 out that I was graduating. And he said, Rudy, you made
8 it and you made it on your own merits.

9 Victor connected me with a youth program to
10 help me to get a good paying job with the city of Los
11 Angeles and I became a lifeguard for eight years. I
12 was the true Baywatch.

13 By the time I was 21, I wanted to do something
14 with my life. I called up the LAPD and asked how do I
15 become a police officer on a campus. I found out that
16 there was a department designated just for that. And
17 my dream became -- forgive me.

18 And my dream became being a school police
19 officer and giving back in the way that Victor gave to
20 me. I graduated from the police academy and went
21 straight to work for the Los Angeles School Police
22 Department, where I have been an officer for 16 years,

1 changing the lives of many students in a positive way.

2 I know -- I now know former students who are serving in
3 their communities in a variety of roles as firemen,
4 clergy, office managers and so much more.

5 Through my experience, I was able to start a
6 nonprofit organization named Friends of Safe Schools
7 USA, which supports safety in education, a nonprofit
8 that is serving communities by connecting law
9 enforcement officers and students. The officers
10 involved gave four tons of food last Thanksgiving and
11 thousands of dollars in school supplies and backpacks.

12 I also recently became the vice president of
13 the National Association of School Resource Officers
14 and formerly served as the president and then vice
15 president of the Los Angeles School Police Officers
16 Association, which represents 500 school police
17 officers and SSOs in the Los Angeles area.

18 My father's greatest advice was I must become
19 a history-maker so that the footprints I leave lead
20 others to the path of success. It my job to mentor,
21 protect and lead -- forgive me. It is my job to
22 mentor, protect and lead students safely into

1 graduation.

2 I work for the Los Angeles Unified School
3 District, where we serve 700,000 students, 69,000
4 employees, 710 miles of jurisdiction in over 21 cities.
5 I have experience working on difficult campuses that
6 tare located in the center of high volatile areas.

7 Many of my students are -- many students are
8 still getting in trouble. But many more are crossing
9 the graduation line and it is because of SROs have the
10 ability to empathize with students, staff and community
11 members. He or she will engage in diversion programs,
12 restorative justice programs.

13 Along aside administrators, the resource
14 officer helps find solutions of compromise that benefit
15 the student. Because we believe in helping kids grow,
16 we take the time to assess each situation to decide
17 social or mental health services are needed rather than
18 incarceration, and I say rather than incarceration.

19 It takes not a village, but a country to raise
20 a child. The American dream is possible for students
21 if the SROs are properly selected, properly trained,
22 properly equipped and properly compensated, to work

1 with students and lead them into graduation safely.
2 Education is the key to become a productive member of
3 society. School resource officers need to make this
4 happen. Forgive me.

5 School resource officers help make this happen
6 and, because of relationships we have built in the Los
7 Angeles area, I've got to tell you that last year,
8 2017, 23 handguns and eight rifles were recovered
9 because of the kind of relationships we have with our
10 students.

11 And I'll finish with this statement.
12 Education must be first. Education must be first.
13 Safety always. Thank you.

14 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Detective
15 Perez. Good to have you back. Mr. Hulin, we're
16 pleased to hear from you.

17 MR. HULIN: Thank you, and thank you for
18 allowing me to share my personal --

19 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Your principal's
20 perspective.

21 MR. HULIN: Perspective. That's correct.

22 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: -- from a high school

1 principal. Thank you.

2 MR. HULIN: Yes, personal perspective on the
3 merits of school resource officers in our schools.
4 Parents and guardians personally trust to provide their
5 child with a safe and secure educational environment
6 every single day. And that's from the moment the child
7 enters our facilities until the time they arrive home
8 safely.

9 This is a daunting task for any school
10 administrator and one I don't take lightly. School
11 safety is the one concern that keeps me awake at night.

12 I personally believe that the Hoover High
13 School SROs are the most critical component to ensuring
14 the safest school environment possible for my 3,000
15 students, over 300 faculty and staff members and
16 visitors on my campus daily.

17 Our SROs' main goal is to provide the safety
18 and security of every single person on my campus.
19 Being principal of Alabama's largest and most diverse
20 school for the past 10 years, one that has been served
21 and protected by trained professional school resource
22 officers, has strengthened my resolve that SROs need to

1 be not only in my school but in all schools.

2 During my career, I've worked in schools
3 having no SROs, schools ranging from very large high
4 schools in Louisiana to a small K-12 rural school in
5 Alabama.

6 Most of those schools had very limited
7 protective measures in place such as metal detectors,
8 cameras, surveillance systems and other safety
9 components. Others had none. And sadly, none of those
10 had SROs.

11 In reflection, those schools were much more
12 vulnerable to a safety event by not having trained
13 resource officers on their campuses. I am incredibly
14 fortunate to have four SRO's full-time on my two
15 campuses. I wish I had more.

16 We recently increased the number of SROs on my
17 campus from three to four after the Marjorie Stoneman
18 Douglas shooting in Florida. After the shooting, a
19 detailed review by our SROs and my administrative team
20 identified gaps in our campus security plan.

21 Our SROs undertook an in-depth safety review
22 in identification of those needed steps taken to

1 protect our kids. Hoover High School resource officers
2 are assigned numerous tasks other than providing school
3 safety. They do so much more. They take the lead in
4 planning, development, implementation and practice and
5 the constant evolution of our school safety and crisis
6 management plan.

7 As mentioned, they immediately reviewed our
8 security plan after the Florida shooting and they made
9 those needed suggestions, one being improving the
10 response time to a critical event by having an
11 additional officer on my campus.

12 Response time is critical in crisis management
13 and to the amount of collateral damage that a school
14 intruder can inflict on my school.

15 It is important to understand that I'm not a
16 trained safety or crisis management person nor is
17 anyone on my staff. We are trained educators. Our
18 officers have gone through a rigorous training process
19 prior to them even stepping foot on our campus. They
20 continue to train, alternative best practices.

21 I'm very fortunate to have one of my officers
22 who is currently a firearms instructor, an active

1 shooter instructor and a bomb technician. All of my
2 officers are part of our SRT team, our special response
3 team, and know professional expertise to make the
4 critical during school safety invaluable to me.

5 I value our SROs' professional experience and
6 knowledge to guide me and my administrative team to
7 provide an all-encompassing safety plan for Hoover High
8 School. This is not an easy task.

9 My school facility blueprint consists of a
10 main campus, an annex building and numerous outdoor
11 academic and extracurricular venues. The three-story
12 main building alone at Hoover High School has 110
13 exterior glass doors.

14 Like most older schools, mine was not built
15 with safety in mind. In 1994, Hoover High School was
16 designed to move 3,000 students and staff efficiently
17 every 50 minutes. My SROs not only guide us through
18 that safety best practices inside our building but are
19 very helpful in our outdoor areas of concern.

20 The arrival, dismissal and after-school
21 logistics are very concerning safety areas for
22 discussion. For example, our parking lots, student

1 drop-off areas, bus arrival and dismissal. I have 25
2 buses that feed my school every day -- to outdoor
3 athletic events.

4 SROs provide us with the best safety options
5 through their insight. Those areas extremely
6 vulnerable in becoming -- for our students and visitors
7 to a huge open campus which makes it very, very unsafe
8 for them.

9 Student travel coverage to and from events is
10 also very important. Our athletic and academic teams
11 travel to local state and national competitions
12 frequently. SROs are assigned to travel with those
13 teams. It provides me and our parents with a sense of
14 protectiveness for our kids.

15 SROs most importantly develop relationships
16 based on trust with our students. I think you've heard
17 that today -- in addition with our staff and community.

18 Most people are naturally apprehensive of
19 police. SROs work extremely hard to make our kids feel
20 comfortable around police officers. They accomplish
21 this by simply talking and communicating with our kids
22 on a variety of topics.

1 Simply just saying good morning goes a long
2 way in relationship-building with our students,
3 especially with 3,000 students on campus. Our kids
4 view our SROs as just another person talking to them,
5 not a cop.

6 SROs will always -- excuse me. SROs provide
7 advice and personally refer our kids to appropriate
8 counselors if needed. Kids will always remember and
9 respect the person that took the time to help them in
10 school, especially a school our size.

11 In turn, a school culture of trust and
12 ownership grows within our school. Building these
13 relationships provides our school with a means of
14 constantly checking the pulse of our school and our
15 community as it relates to school safety.

16 It allows us to be proactive in recognition of
17 that troubled student. It also allows us to be
18 recognizable of the issues within a home and relate
19 safety problems in our community.

20 My SROs lead that charge and make it much
21 easier to deal with potential flashpoints of violence
22 before they one day spill into my school. SROs are

1 true examples of positive, profession and caring police
2 officers for our kids and stakeholders.

3 Sometimes our kids need to experience in
4 person and not only through visuals as we all see in
5 the news today or in reporting on social media.

6 My lead SRO commented on the misconceptions of
7 their duties. He said arresting kids is not our number
8 one goal, like most people think. The greatest tool we
9 have as a police officer is discretion. Our job is not
10 to arrest our kids, but to protect and help them and
11 school administrators in any way possible.

12 And finally, I had some very tough
13 conversations with my students after the Parkland
14 shooting. They were scared. They wanted me to assure
15 them that our school was safe. They asked could a
16 shooting like this happen in our school. Will you and
17 the SROs protect us?

18 Difficult questions for me to answer. I
19 didn't sugarcoat my answers to my kids about those
20 school safety questions. I can't guarantee a perfectly
21 safe school. In my opinion, none exist.

22 What surprised me the most though at the end

1 those conversations with my kids was that every single
2 kid I talked to wanted this one thing at Hoover High
3 School.

4 Every single one of them wanted it to be a
5 safe place. But they also didn't want it to feel like
6 a prison. Tough job. I can't imagine trying to find a
7 happy median for our kids in school without the help of
8 our SROs.

9 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you very much. I
10 appreciate those comments and I know we all do.
11 Secretary DeVos, would you like to start with questions
12 for this panel?

13 Q&A SESSION

14 SEC. DEVOS: Sure. I'd like to ask both Mr.
15 Negrón and Ms. Kidd, you both indicated in different
16 ways that it's important for decisions around
17 discipline to be made at the most local level.

18 Could you expound a little bit on that and
19 what role can or should the federal government play in
20 this area? And then, accompanying that, what
21 assurances can you give that schools will impose
22 discipline in a racially neutral fashion?

1 MR. NEGRÓN: So, I can start with that. Thank
2 you for the question, Secretary DeVos. Schools are
3 committed to complying with the law, and that means
4 imposing discipline in a way that complies with the
5 requirements of the law and so that it's not race-
6 based.

7 I think that your comments earlier about the
8 fact that this panel would make recommendations as
9 opposed to mandates is really an answer to your
10 question because we believe that schools, professional
11 educators are the best place to make educational
12 choices.

13 Students sometimes fight. It's a part of the
14 process of growing up and a part of adolescence that
15 happens. And although under strictly criminal law
16 terms, that could well be a battery, the majority of
17 those are solved at a very low level within the school
18 setting, teaching children the appropriate ways to
19 behave, the appropriate ways to resolve conflict.

20 All of that to say that not every instance of
21 school discipline, even one that is ostensibly violent,
22 is right for referral to criminal law enforcement. So

1 I think that the federal government has a role in
2 providing the resources, not only so that schools can
3 hire school resource officers, but in offering guidance
4 to the interpretation of FERPA, for instance, so that
5 school districts can exercise reasonable educational
6 judgment to share within their judgment information
7 that could result in the referral to medical services
8 or mental health services or community services, if
9 those are needed, or to also prevent tragedy by
10 referrals to law enforcement.

11 MS. KIDD: I would like to agree
12 wholeheartedly with what he just said. In addition,
13 I'd like to ask that you look at FERPA and expand FERPA
14 to allow teachers to video or photograph students not
15 from -- for social media, but to maintain a safe
16 environment.

17 Teachers who -- because in large high schools,
18 similar to Hoover or others around the country, we
19 don't know every student. And if a student refuses to
20 identify themselves and there's a situation brewing, we
21 need to be able to identify them and the easiest way is
22 most teachers have a cellphone.

1 And if we can have the ability to do what
2 students do for teachers all the time and that without
3 being -- having that turned on because I know of too
4 many cases where teachers have, in order to report an
5 issue that is unsafe, they have taken a photograph.
6 And they are the ones who have to pay the price.

7 So if it could be revisited in that regard so
8 that teachers aren't suffering as a result of trying to
9 maintain a safe environment. He is correct. There are
10 a number of issues where there is misbehavior in
11 school. And it's not race-based decision-making.

12 But locally, we need to be able to take care
13 of the situation. It doesn't need to be escalated, nor
14 do we have to have funds tied to it.

15 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: All right. I would ask
16 Mr. Hulin, from your perspective, you said you would
17 like to have more officers, SROs.

18 Is it funding or do you have community
19 opposition or are you aware of any national opposition
20 to the school resource officer program? And maybe our
21 other SROs here could comment on that too.

22 MR. HULIN: No opposition from anybody within

1 the Hoover City School District. They are very
2 thankful that we have those officers on campus. It
3 does come down to funding sometimes.

4 You know, we have a great relationship in
5 Hoover between our school system and our city. So
6 we're allowed to have additional resource officers, not
7 only on my campus, but also in our elementary schools
8 and our middle schools.

9 So that work framework between city government
10 and the elected school board and our school system is
11 critical to making sure we get those added resources to
12 have additional SROs on campus.

13 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Do they go through their
14 police department budget or your budget?

15 MR. HULIN: A little of both.

16 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Any other opposition you
17 hear on --

18 MR. PEREZ: Yes, sir. The beauty of this
19 conversation is we want to get to where Hoover's at,
20 right? And in Los Angeles, we are having a massive
21 amount of budget issues where we are losing officers
22 even to other agencies that are getting paid 30 percent

1 more. That's hard because of the mission of what we do
2 is amazing.

3 I would submit to this panel that we would
4 start and engage something in the Blue in School Shield
5 initiative where, you know, the officer is once again
6 the catalyst of bringing resources, you know, whether
7 it's mental health services, social services,
8 counseling. And he is the one person, sir, that can
9 connect it.

10 But we're dealing -- because we started this,
11 we're dealing with this with BLM affecting us, not
12 wanting cops on campuses.

13 They will protest against us and we will deal
14 with all sorts of social issues right now in Los
15 Angeles because they believe the cop is there to arrest
16 kids, which is the complete opposite of what we are
17 doing. But we are having a lot in Los Angeles
18 affecting us.

19 MR. BRIDGES: Let me add something on top of
20 that.

21 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Yes?

22 MR. BRIDGES: I think that when we look at the

1 implementation of SRO programs, when we look at whether
2 or not there is opposition, whether or not there is
3 opposition oftentimes depends on what relationship that
4 particular area has with its police department.

5 Within our county, when we were starting, we
6 had absolutely no opposition to it. And the reason is
7 for over 100 years, our agency was always closely
8 connected to the community.

9 So when we look at trying to implement SRO
10 programs, our history in a whole lot of cases dictates
11 whether or not there is opposition to the program.

12 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Secretary Azar?

13 SEC. AZAR: I guess applicable to everyone,
14 but Mr. Negrón, could you just let me know what -- do
15 you see major barriers -- you mentioned FERPA.

16 Are there major barriers to information-
17 sharing that you wish, from a legal perspective, you
18 could solve between school resource officers,
19 administrator's, mental health professionals, social
20 workers and others that are providing different
21 resources around the kids, but that they are prevented
22 from sharing that with each other to create a holistic

1 approach to the child that really may be getting in the
2 way of school safety issues and mental healthcare?

3 MR. NEGRÓN: Thank you for the question. I
4 mean, I think you're exactly right when you mention a
5 holistic approach because for that information-sharing
6 to be truly valuable, it must be shared amongst the
7 professionals.

8 I think from the FERPA perspective first, we
9 think FERPA as it reads now actually permits
10 information-sharing. Unfortunately, because sometimes
11 we tend to be a little skittish about sharing
12 information and being somewhat conservative about that
13 because pieces of the law don't quite articulate the
14 circumstances, right.

15 So we're looking for a standard that suggests
16 something like a reasonable judgment of educators. And
17 so, school officials, naturally being cautious, tend to
18 sort of err on the side of being conservative about
19 sharing the information.

20 They don't want to cross a line that is
21 somehow inappropriate. I think that's where federal
22 guidance could help, certainly with input from

1 educators and locals.

2 Now, there's another piece when it comes to
3 the mental health component. I'm not a medical law
4 expert. But I can tell you that certain laws like
5 HIPAA and other pieces would have to be looked at and
6 clarification around what can be shared there from a
7 mental health perspective.

8 We want to encourage, of course, students and
9 community members to access mental health services. So
10 it would be important to hear what those parameters
11 ought to be for them. But I think it's certainly
12 something that should be taken a look at for guidance.

13 MR. BRIDGES: May I add something? I think
14 that when we look at that issue relative to
15 information-sharing, where the ball is dropped in this
16 country is that there is a disconnect with the various
17 school board lawyers because, in every state, their
18 interpretation of the law is very, very different.

19 So whenever we do training on a national
20 level, it is almost impossible to even have a
21 conversation because what lawyer A, how he or she
22 interprets it is far different from lawyer B. So if I

1 were in your position, what I would be looking at is
2 perhaps having some type of forum where we can bring
3 those people together to have those conversations.

4 MR. NEGRÓN: If I could just respond to one
5 thing on behalf of my fellow school lawyers and in sort
6 of their respectful defense, I would say that lawyers
7 also by nature tend to be conservative in advising
8 their clients about overstepping bounds.

9 And the problem is further complicated by the
10 fact that every jurisdiction has student privacy laws
11 of their own overlaid on top of the FERPA requirements.

12 And so, there are unique aspects of state law
13 that differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction that
14 further complicates not only FERPA. So FERPA should be
15 looked at comprehensively in light of those state legal
16 frameworks that exist.

17 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Well, thank you,
18 Secretary Azar. I'll just but in one moment and say
19 that I was involved in the discussions over IDEA reform
20 a number of years ago. We ended up with bipartisan
21 legislation.

22 But the whole gist of that was to basically

1 give more respect to our principals and teachers in how
2 to decide children with disabilities, how to handle
3 them and not try to write a regulation in Washington.

4 We had a whole infrastructure of lawyers and
5 lawsuits constantly. I think that dropped down a great
6 deal. Maybe we could do something similar here, give
7 more bright line approval of certain activities that
8 would be positive. Secretary Nielsen? Thank you.

9 SEC. NIELSEN: Sure. So first, I just want to
10 say thank you for your expertise and what is clearly a
11 passion and compassion that you share and you have for
12 the children. And thank you for what you do.

13 In our discussions, we've heard a bit of
14 frustration from staff that information that they share
15 with school administrators or law enforcement appears
16 to then not be acted on. And what I wonder, if it's
17 less of an inaction and more that perhaps we just need
18 a better feedback loop.

19 So I'd be curious into what can, you know,
20 administrators and SROs report back to those reporting.
21 You know, how does that feedback -- because I think it
22 builds trust as well if you understand that what you're

1 reporting is being acted on. Is there a way to do that
2 or best practices that we could capture? Thank you.

3 MR. PEREZ: As we oversee the threat
4 assessment unit in Los Angeles, we have six clinicians
5 and law enforcement now joining together in a patrol
6 car. So you're talking about threats. And it is very
7 difficult. It is very difficult to have that
8 communication line go back and forth.

9 One of the things that I believe we should
10 have -- and it ties into a little bit of your question
11 -- is at a federal level a system that we can go, hey,
12 he's at this school. He's going through this process,
13 these kind of threats.

14 You know, this was the kind of level that we
15 saw. Is it involving high volume violence or is it a
16 mental health issue? But we have nothing in place
17 where he goes from one elementary to another school,
18 now to our colleges. There is a complete disconnect.

19 So if there could be a connection that we
20 could come and share this information, that would be --
21 or system in place that we can come together in going
22 these are the threats that we are seeing. But it is

1 very difficult to get my threat information to another
2 person. And we need your help on that.

3 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Very good. Thank you
4 very much, panel. This was very insightful and we
5 appreciate it. We thank you, and if I could ask panel
6 three to join us at this time?

7 Our third panel showcases law enforcement best
8 practices in the areas of school safety. And we are
9 joined today by three expert witnesses who've spent
10 their careers protecting and serving the public.

11 Mo Canady is the executive director for the
12 National Association of School Resource Officers and
13 past president of the Alabama Association of School
14 Resource Officers. He spent 25 years in the Hoover
15 Police Department, including 12 years as supervisor of
16 the school services division.

17 With him on the panel is Clarence Cox, III,
18 president of the National Organization of Black Law
19 Enforcement Executives. Good to see you again,
20 Clarence. He is director of the special projects for
21 the Fulton County Police Department in Georgia, where
22 he created the Clayton County Public Schools Police

1 Department in 2013.

2 Also joining us today is Vernon Keenan, who's
3 served as director of the Georgia Bureau of
4 Investigation since 2013 and is a member of the board
5 of directors for the International Association of
6 Chiefs of Police.

7 Thank you all for being here with us today.
8 Mr. Canady, would you like to begin?

9 PANEL 3 PRESENTATION: BEST PRACTICES IN SCHOOL SAFETY

10 MR. CANADY: Yes, sir. Thank you. Secretary
11 of Education DeVos, Attorney General Sessions and
12 members of the Federal Commission on School Safety,
13 thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the
14 National Association of School Resource Officers.

15 It truly is my honor to serve as the executive
16 director for this outstanding group of law enforcement
17 and educational professionals.

18 NASRO is a not-for-profit association founded
19 in 1991 with a solid commitment to our nation's youth.
20 NASRO is comprised of school-based law enforcement
21 officers, school administrators and school security and
22 safety professionals working as partners to protect

1 students, faculty and staff and their school
2 communities.

3 The SRO refers to a commissioned law
4 enforcement officer selected, trained and assigned to
5 protect and serve an educational environment. I cannot
6 emphasize enough how critical it is for officers to be
7 carefully selected and specially trained to function in
8 a school environment. This is always a factor in the
9 success or failure of any SRO program.

10 The SRO program is most effective when it's
11 built on the foundation of interagency collaboration.
12 Through a formal memorandum of understanding between a
13 law enforcement agency and a school district, each
14 collaborator has a clear and properly enforced
15 understanding of his or her role in the school
16 environment.

17 The role of the SRO should utilize the triad
18 concept of school-based policing in which an SRO
19 functions in a school environment in three capacities:
20 as a law enforcement officer, as a guest speaker or
21 educator and as an informal counselor or mentor. These
22 strategies should be based on a set of well-established

1 best practices which NASRO has spent nearly 28 years
2 crafting.

3 The NASRO board of directors recently
4 commissioned a group of dedicated association members
5 to create a formal document of standards and best
6 practices for school resource officer programs.

7 On July 13, 2018, this important document was
8 completed and today the Federal Commission on School
9 Safety are the first recipients of the National
10 Association of School Resource Officers standards and
11 best practices for school resource officer programs.

12 These standards are organized in four
13 sections, each of which encompasses an essential
14 component of a successful SRO program.

15 The first section outlines administrative
16 standards, including an outline of the definition and
17 purpose of an SRO and recommendations for the composing
18 of a memorandum of understanding between a law
19 enforcement agency and a school.

20 An SRO should be a sworn, certified law
21 enforcement officer assigned to a community-based
22 policing program and actively working in a

1 collaborative effort with a school district. When this
2 definition is followed, the SRO program serves at a
3 tremendous benefit to its school community.

4 However, when the definition is not adhered
5 to, the SRO program's effectiveness will, at best, be
6 greatly hindered and, at worst, be significantly
7 detrimental to the school, the law enforcement agency
8 and even the community.

9 The number one goal of any successful SRO must
10 be to bridge the gap between law enforcement and youth.
11 Positive relationships between students and SROs lay a
12 powerful foundation for the exchange of information.

13 These relationships, along with those the SRO
14 builds with the school administration and with parents,
15 can and have averted acts of school violence before a
16 shot was ever fired.

17 The second section speaks to the importance of
18 the selection process. The SRO position is a unique
19 assignment in law enforcement and it requires a unique
20 officer to properly serve in it. Due to the nature of
21 the assignment, the SRO will become one of the most
22 well-known offices in their community.

1 The officer selected for this position must
2 have law enforcement experience, be of good moral
3 character and have a sincere willingness to work with
4 students and youth.

5 The third section outlines the essential
6 details of an SRO's specialized training. Once the
7 officer has been carefully selected, it is then
8 critical that he or she be specifically trained to work
9 in a school environment in the triad approach.

10 Every SRO should attend and complete NASRO's
11 basic SRO course, which includes topics such as
12 foundations of school-based policing, understanding the
13 teen brain, school law and emergency operations plans.

14 An SRO's training must be ongoing as
15 educational trends and school culture change and should
16 include topics such as adolescent mental health, threat
17 assessment and active shooter response.

18 The final section highlights the make or break
19 importance of interagency collaboration between the
20 school district and the law enforcement agency. Proper
21 collaboration between school officials and SROs will
22 most definitely be effective in preserving the campus

1 from disruptive forces while nurturing and protecting
2 youth who are compelled to attend school. This
3 collaboration should be formalized in a memorandum of
4 understanding.

5 As the world's leader in school-based
6 policing, NASRO has regularly spoken to the critical
7 need for national standards for SRO programs. We are
8 proud to have authored this important document, created
9 in the furthering of our mission to keep every school
10 and every student safe.

11 We ask you, the Federal Commission on School
12 Safety, to support these recommended standards. Thank
13 you very much.

14 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Mo. It's
15 good to have you with us. And Chief Cox?

16 MR. COX: Thank you, Attorney General
17 Sessions. I'm very honored and excited to be here to
18 participate in such a formative panel. And I come to
19 you representing the National Organization of Black Law
20 Enforcement Executives, where I serve as current
21 president.

22 But as a former chief of school district

1 police, where I organized the agency from the ground
2 up, I had several considerations as I assembled my
3 team.

4 One of the most key important aspects was the
5 development of the policies and procedures around the
6 industry's best practices and most of those were put
7 together by organizations like the NASRO team and the
8 International Association of Chiefs of Police.

9 It was because of my previous experience as an
10 undercover drug agent as well as a drug task force
11 commander, and obviously a proud father and
12 grandfather, I became so passionate about the wellbeing
13 of our youth.

14 Over several decades, I've had the opportunity
15 to arrest mothers and fathers who in many cases turned
16 their minor children over to the department of child
17 protective services when immediate family members were
18 not available to care for that unfortunate child during
19 those types of negative events with law enforcement.

20 And in many instances, these negative,
21 heartbreaking experiences is the very first encounter
22 with law enforcement. Therefore, the role of a school

1 resource officer is essential and central to the first
2 step of building trust and legitimacy in our
3 communities.

4 When they're used in a proper and correct way,
5 the students, staff and visitors will understand the
6 component of this important piece of law enforcement
7 and they need to be used in a way that they will not be
8 a component of the disciplinary practices in the
9 schools.

10 SROs, to avoid using them as a part of the
11 disciplinary processes, policies and procedures should
12 be written as part of the standard operating procedure,
13 both for the school district and the partner law
14 enforcement agency.

15 This should be done and communicated to the
16 educators and administrators of the school system
17 through memorandums of understanding and operational
18 objectives of law enforcement partners.

19 This should also be communicated to the other
20 agencies within that jurisdiction who might provide
21 support in a formal or informal mutual aid agreement.
22 The objectives can clearly be defined and communicated

1 when the law enforcement administrators collaborate in
2 joint staff meetings with the partners of the school
3 system and integrating the safety and security with the
4 teaching and learning environment.

5 You've heard many of my colleagues talk about
6 FERPA. Well, I can tell you some real serious things
7 about FERPA.

8 As a director of the school system safety and
9 security, I face challenges when seeking vital
10 intelligence regarding members of the student body
11 because many educators are concerned with the Family
12 Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA.

13 For law enforcement, this is one of the
14 greatest hindrances facing intelligence-gathering and
15 conducting investigations on students which make threat
16 assessments and predictive analysis difficult, if not
17 impossible.

18 On Tuesday, June 9, 2015, the Metropolitan
19 Police Department here in Washington, D.C. received a
20 call from an unidentified male calling himself Elijah
21 Grant, who claimed that there was a bomb in the White
22 House press briefing room set to detonate in an hour.

1 The White House press briefing room was evacuated and
2 searched. No device was discovered.

3 And then, on Wednesday, June 18th, shortly
4 after 9 o'clock p.m., a long gunman, 21-year-old Dylann
5 Roof, walked into the historic Emanuel African
6 Methodist Church during a weekly Bible study and opened
7 fire, ultimately killing nine unsuspecting
8 parishioners.

9 While the first responders were there
10 collecting evidence at this crime scene, which was
11 already horrific, a bomb threat was called in to the
12 local 9-1-1 center, therefore causing the evacuation of
13 a crime scene.

14 Between June 9, 2015 and June 20, 2015, a male
15 caller, later identified as Nathan Hilton, made
16 numerous additional hoax bomb threats to include the
17 LAX International Airport, government facilities,
18 secure sites and including the United States Secret
19 Service headquarters.

20 This young male was a student in the Clayton
21 County, Georgia police -- I mean, Clayton County,
22 Georgia school system where I was the police chief.

1 And only after obtaining a federal subpoena for this
2 young man's records was it determined that this man had
3 been documented since the age of eight years old with a
4 mental illness.

5 He was a known aggressor of bullying. He was
6 documented to display physical, verbal and sexual
7 aggressive behavior towards adults and peers. Although
8 this young man had been assessed several times,
9 intervention plans had matriculated through his primary
10 education, those plans did not decrease his continued
11 assaults and threats on other students and teachers.

12 These assessments were not shared with the
13 school district police or any other law enforcement
14 entity until the issuance of this federal subpoena by
15 the U.S. Secret Service shortly after hoax bomb threats
16 tied Hilton to the evacuation of the White House press
17 briefing room.

18 When agents entered Hilton's residence to
19 serve a search warrant, he was actually calling in a
20 hoax bomb threat at the time of the service of the
21 search warrant, which was identified by IP address
22 through technology of law enforcement.

1 On December 12, 2015, at his arraignment in
2 Clayton County juvenile court, he entered a guilty plea
3 and admitted to a total of 22 felony terroristic
4 threats.

5 The 22 felony counts of terroristic threats,
6 transmitting a false public alarm, the subject who
7 entered the guilty plea admitted a total of five
8 misdemeanor counts using telephone communications for
9 obscene, threatening or harassing purposes. In
10 essence, this young man had no way of being detected by
11 law enforcement.

12 And unfortunately, many of the folks who was
13 responsible for the interventions and the detection of
14 these problems were friends of mine who could not share
15 because they were afraid of HIPAA. And many of them
16 very well communicated to me that we wanted to tell
17 you. But we were afraid of going to jail.

18 In a recent meeting, I spoke about HIPAA and I
19 was told nobody's ever been prosecuted for HIPAA
20 violations. Whether that's true or not, I don't know.
21 But I will tell you this. Educators believe that that
22 will happen to them and certainly I don't blame them

1 for not sharing. And it was unfortunate that we had to
2 expend so many man-hours, so much equipment and so much
3 inconvenience to the public for this hoax type of
4 communication. And we have got to do something around
5 that.

6 Training our students and teachers. In many
7 school districts, active shooter drills are optional.
8 However, these drills should become mandatory and
9 require -- you know, requirement much like our fire
10 drills. It's shown over time that fire drills have
11 saved lives. And I'm convinced that this thing with
12 mandatory active shooter drills will do the same for
13 our public as we venture on.

14 Therefore, the investigation and interrogation
15 of law enforcement in an academic setting will become
16 easier. I was met by so much resistance when I was
17 chief of police in the district because the educators
18 are there to educate. And then spend most of their
19 time concentrating on the academic portion of their
20 duties.

21 So when we talk about incorporating safety and
22 security into a school setting, sometimes it's often

1 challenged by those who have other jobs to do. And we
2 certainly understand that. But as we talk about arming
3 teachers, I think teachers are already overtasked with
4 duties to provide a structured life for many of our
5 kids who don't have that in the home.

6 So to ask them to carry a weapon, secure a
7 weapon and become proficient in using that weapon is
8 more than enough. And I think that would be a very bad
9 idea.

10 Of course, the cost of that would be
11 astronomical when those monies could be used to soften
12 -- I mean, to harden the targets as a school. Shortly
13 after 9/11, we went to hardening our airports and
14 infrastructures like that.

15 And certainly we've had way too many shootings
16 in our schools and churches that we shouldn't be
17 addressing that type problem in the same fashion as we
18 did after 9/11.

19 We've done a preliminary study that shows that
20 the cost of providing teachers basic firearms training
21 would be about \$71.8 million and that doesn't include
22 the gun itself. That's just the training. And in many

1 cases, law enforcement, we don't shoot that well. So
2 I'm really concerned about a teacher carrying a gun and
3 then trying to secure that gun during the normal
4 workday.

5 With emerging technologies geared towards
6 safer schools, I encourage administrations to provide
7 funding for school districts to provide secure
8 infrastructures. The Department of Education should
9 make it -- should mandate that new campus construction
10 funds meet certain requirements that would ensure the
11 latest technology for security to be integrated into
12 the project.

13 And if we're really serious about the safety
14 of our future, which are our kids, we will take the
15 necessary actions to secure our campuses immediately.
16 Securing facilities can start with instituting single
17 point of entry and consistent monitoring by faculty and
18 staff, especially during the beginning of the school
19 day.

20 Using technology such as the audio enhancement
21 product which will assist in the learning platform as
22 well as a security, this system has a capability of

1 mass notification and integration, bell paging and
2 intercom systems, both internally as well as
3 externally. It provides first responders with real-
4 time video within 80 feet of the structure outside
5 while providing full coverage inside the facility with
6 4K cameras.

7 A great example of this technology can be seen
8 in the Bibb County, Georgia school system. A concept
9 of crime prevention through economical design has been
10 -- has to be incorporated into federal, state and local
11 funding mechanisms as new campuses are constructed and
12 old facilities are renovated.

13 There should be a list of certified
14 contractors who meet required standards for this. An
15 example would be like the Parsons Corporation that has
16 done this in Dallas, Texas and they're from Pasadena,
17 California. And I know this because I've done research
18 on best technology out there.

19 The coordination between law enforcement and
20 schools is paramount. Even if a school district cannot
21 afford to have a resource officer, it's imperative that
22 district has all local public safety, first responders

1 develop a comprehensive plan for each campus within
2 that jurisdiction. These plans should include
3 evacuation plans, maps, emergency contact numbers,
4 relocation and reunification designations and
5 transportation resources.

6 These plans should define areas of
7 responsibility and be rehearsed regularly through
8 tabletop exercises as well as mock drills.

9 The revisions and updates should be
10 communicated to all members of that team as well and
11 the plan should include nontraditional partners as
12 well, like service providers, utility providers, as
13 well as nonprofit providers, keeping in mind sensitive
14 documents, blueprints, student information will be
15 confidential. So I thank you for allowing me to
16 expound on this topic.

17 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Chief. And
18 we appreciate that. Now, Director Keenan?

19 MR. KEENAN: Thank you, sir. I want to thank
20 the commission for allowing me to speak on behalf of
21 state and local law enforcement on the issue of school
22 safety best practices.

1 On June the 27th, the FBI hosted a summit on
2 school safety at FBI headquarters and they invited
3 representatives for the International Association of
4 Chiefs of Police, National Sheriffs Association, Major
5 Cities Chiefs Association, Major County Sheriffs'
6 Associations, the Association of State Criminal
7 Investigative Agencies and all of the other major law
8 enforcement organizations.

9 The purpose of the summit was to identify and
10 develop best practices in school safety and also to
11 coordinate law enforcement's efforts so that we do not
12 develop separate and potentially conflicting resources.
13 And there will be a report generated from that summit
14 in the near future which will outline the best
15 practices that were identified.

16 Now, the best practices can be characterized
17 into five general areas. The first one is the
18 partnership both within law enforcement discipline and
19 with other locally based partners, including education
20 departments and social service providers.

21 The role of the school resource officer and
22 campus-based armed law enforcement officers, and you've

1 heard subject matter experts give testimony here today.
2 Intervention techniques and threat assessments. School
3 vulnerability assessments and target hardening efforts.
4 And active instant response resources and tools.

5 Now, I'd like to highlight just a few of the
6 best practices that were concretely identified in the
7 summit. The first area in the identification of best
8 practices is related to understanding the threat and
9 the warning signs or behaviors that may signal a
10 violent act.

11 One of the inspectors from the Georgia Bureau
12 of Investigation was previously a school counselor.
13 And she educated the attendees in understanding the
14 types of changes in student behavior that may be an
15 indicator of a potential violent act and then better
16 understanding the need for school-based partnerships
17 and the consistent reporting efforts related to
18 behaviors and indicators.

19 The FBI behavioral analysis unit has done
20 great work in this area in terms of identifying warning
21 signs and behaviors, as well as providing guidance on
22 the development of threat assessment teams. And the

1 DHS commissioner referenced the Secret Service guidance
2 which came out this month. I brought a copy with me.
3 Excellent document. It is a roadmap law enforcement
4 and education can use in developing the threat
5 assessment teams for their communities and for their
6 schools.

7 Based on this better understanding of
8 behaviors associated with school threats, we must have
9 better collection of appropriate information to aid in
10 our intelligence and investigative efforts.

11 Many fusion centers across the nation are
12 partnering with local law enforcement and their school
13 systems to support local efforts, including serving as
14 collection points for warning information and
15 participating in threat assessment teams.

16 Fusion centers function as a national asset to
17 support law enforcement in understanding and
18 identifying threats and behaviors, including threats to
19 our schools. For instance, in Alabama, the governor
20 has recommended that the Alabama fusion center receive
21 reported school threats via mobile application and then
22 screen and investigate these threats and see that

1 they're routed to the appropriate agency for handling.

2 Georgia uses this same model.

3 Many fusion centers also have liaison officers
4 who work for a local law enforcement agency and then
5 partner with the state and major urban area fusion
6 centers to share information on trends, suspicious
7 activity threats and other information. And this could
8 certainly be put into the world of school violence.

9 It is well-established that school resource
10 officers are a key component of school safety. And
11 you've heard testimony from the subject experts here.

12 Another best practice is the development of a
13 school crisis response plan and the integration of law
14 enforcement in the development and implementation of
15 these plans.

16 As first responders, law enforcement officers
17 should be designated to participate in school crisis
18 response plan development and then ensure that all law
19 enforcement agents and officers in a school's
20 jurisdiction are aware of and understand the plan.

21 As part of the crisis response plan
22 development and implementation, another best practice

1 is the integration and use of vulnerability
2 assessments. In Florida, an assessment tool is being
3 developed to assist school districts in conducting
4 security assessments to identify threats and
5 vulnerabilities.

6 In continuing to build upon these best
7 practices, one of the focus areas for law enforcement
8 association is the hardening of schools. And this can
9 be accomplished through a layered approach, focusing on
10 the protection of students, including the use of
11 ballistic glass, metal detectors and other instruments
12 and technologies.

13 The Indiana Sheriffs' Association has worked
14 with their school districts to develop what is called
15 the best practices solution. And this practice used
16 the layered approach I just referenced to mitigate
17 schools as a soft target, including the use of
18 technology for both target hardening and expedited
19 response efforts.

20 Another best practice to assist local law
21 enforcement in enhancing response efforts is the work
22 of the Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law

1 Enforcement Network. And this provides a service to
2 law enforcement through its development of school-based
3 action plans. These plans provide law enforcement with
4 resources related to an individual school, including
5 aerial maps of the school, location of the exit points
6 and other response-related images and locations.

7 Also related to response and mitigation
8 efforts is the Los Angeles Police Department's mental
9 evaluation unit, which serves as a best practice. This
10 unit was created to develop a checklist to assist
11 officers in better understanding how to respond and
12 interact with persons who are threatening acts of
13 targeted violence.

14 The last area of identified best practices is
15 information-sharing, including the use of mobile
16 applications for reporting. The Virginia state police
17 has a threat assessment process that includes the
18 establishment of a team to assist schools in navigating
19 the assessment process, including privacy concerns
20 related to the assessments.

21 Colorado's security emergency management has
22 developed a Safe2Tell app, implemented after the

1 Columbine shooting. The Texas Department of Public
2 Safety has the iWATCHtx reporting system for school-
3 related reporting and information-sharing.

4 State and local law enforcement also
5 absolutely support the Department of Homeland
6 Security's expansion of the suspicious activity
7 reporting system so that going beyond terrorism, but to
8 incorporate school violence information and also other
9 criminal activity.

10 So as you can see, there are many best
11 practices that are already in place. And I applaud
12 President Trump and his administration for bringing law
13 enforcement and all of us together to create a
14 partnership so that we can move forward with protecting
15 our schools and protecting our students. Thank you,
16 sir.

17 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you, Director
18 Keenan. Our education secretary and leader of our
19 group, Secretary DeVos.

20 Q&A SESSION

21 SEC. DEVOS: Well, I'd like to thank all the
22 panelists for being here today. Thank you for your

1 insights. Very, very helpful. My question is what
2 role can parents and the broader community play in
3 supporting implementation of best practices in schools.

4 MR. KEENAN: I think the first step that is
5 critical for the community, teachers and
6 parents/caregivers to understand and be educated on the
7 indicators of destructive behavior and then have a
8 mechanism where they can report that information so
9 that it can be vetted and then acted upon
10 appropriately. So a first step is the education
11 process.

12 I also believe that many of the tools that
13 we've talked about here today can also be applied in
14 the area of youth suicide. In the last five years in
15 Georgia, we've had 211 students who have committed
16 suicide. Five times that number have been admitted to
17 the hospital for attempted suicide. That's based on
18 records.

19 So indications of destructive behavior,
20 whether it's going to be directed to the student
21 himself or against other students, all of this can
22 work together in a framework to protect our students.

1 MR. CANADY: Also one of the things is a
2 simple thing really. But as we build relationships
3 with students, we also build relationships with their
4 parents as school resource officers. And many is the
5 time that SROs who have worked for me, they would
6 receive a call from a parent.

7 Because they had developed a relationship with
8 the student, they had developed it with the parent.
9 The parent saw something of concern. It also gives us
10 the opportunity at parent meetings and in other ways to
11 educate parents on those things to be looking out for.

12 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Mr. Canady, you're the
13 executive director of the National Association of
14 School Resource Officers and have been at this for a
15 long time.

16 I think what Chief Clarence Cox said has a lot
17 of validity, which seems to be no matter what the laws
18 actually are, people are afraid of those laws and are
19 not cooperating and sharing information sufficiently.
20 Do you share that view and do you have any suggestions
21 for improvement?

22 MR. CANADY: Yeah. I certainly share that

1 concern because, you know, in situations where we are
2 trying to communicate within the school between the
3 administration and the SRO, I think there is that fear
4 on the part of many school administrators that they
5 could be held in violation of something for sharing
6 that information with us.

7 Does the information get shared? Sometimes in
8 one way or another, yes, it does, for the protection of
9 students. But there is still that fear. So I think
10 that as we look at FERPA and as we look at some of the
11 other issues, there are -- within FERPA, there are
12 opportunities to be able to share information.

13 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Right.

14 MR. CANADY: There certainly are. But it can
15 become very complicated. It can become kind of a
16 bureaucracy, if you will, of trying to get to the point
17 that you can actually legally share that information.

18 One of the things that always frustrated me as
19 an SRO was the inability just to have that line level
20 conversation with my school administrator. Juvenile
21 rights are very important. It is important we protect
22 that information. But I think we can hopefully open

1 the door for that a little bit more so that we can
2 share it properly and save lives.

3 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you. Secretary
4 Azar?

5 SEC. AZAR: Mr. Canady, you mentioned the
6 standards and then showed us the standards you've got
7 for training school resource officers. What role could
8 the federal government have to support those efforts?
9 What would you look for from the feds?

10 MR. CANADY: One of the things that becomes
11 frustrating for me is when I get a call in my office
12 about an SRO and what they may or may not have done in
13 a school setting.

14 And the first thing I strive to find out is
15 have we ever trained that SRO. Have they ever been
16 through our training? Have they ever been a member of
17 our association? By in large, when that happens and
18 it's a negative situation, the answer is no. We
19 haven't trained them.

20 And so, then it becomes me having to say I'm
21 sorry, but I don't know how they're trained. I think
22 if there were a set of national standards that applied

1 across the board in terms of the things, the primary
2 things an SRO should be trained on, how they should be
3 trained and, maybe more importantly, who should train
4 them, I think that's really important.

5 I think if there were standards across the
6 board on that, those would be much easier questions to
7 answer. And quite frankly, I might not have to answer
8 those questions as often. We believe training is that
9 critically important.

10 MR. COX: If I may add, I think one of the
11 other pieces though -- and I agree with Mo -- we also
12 have to train the educators because, if you remember
13 the incident in South Carolina where the SRO slung a
14 young girl down the hall and out of the chair, that was
15 horrible.

16 I got calls about that immediately. And my
17 first thought was the SRO was in a position that he
18 never should have been in from the first place,
19 although what he did, I don't condone. But he was
20 being used in the disciplinary process. And that's not
21 a good way to build trust and legitimacy with our young
22 people if they're going to be part of that disciplinary

1 process.

2 They're there to protect the students, staff
3 and visitors of that campus, not to administer time out
4 or in-school suspension. So I certainly agree with
5 what Mo has just said.

6 But I think also there needs to be some type
7 mandated training for the administrator in this space
8 as well so that they know the proper application of an
9 SRO because I've had to have conversations with
10 administrators when I was chief where they'd have my
11 SROs over guarding the kids who were in -- who had IEPs
12 and were disruptive in class. And that's not what we
13 do. I think that needs to be added.

14 MR. CANADY: That's a good point.

15 MR. COX: Yeah.

16 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Thank you. Secretary
17 Nielsen?

18 SEC. NIELSEN: Yeah. So I'm struck by all of
19 the best practices you've shared and I really
20 appreciate that. Something that we struggle with
21 whenever we talk about best practices in communities,
22 when we're talking about security threats, is how to

1 tailor the best practices to the community. So we know
2 that one size doesn't fit all. You mentioned that and
3 the panel before you did as well. But we all have very
4 limited resources.

5 So my question is would it be helpful to have
6 some sort of almost companion questions that help a
7 community think about their needs so that they can then
8 associate limited resources with the best practices.

9 You know, we have so many different ideas in
10 that operational guide. But there's not one school
11 that can afford all that, right? So how do we -- how
12 do we help them understand that part?

13 MR. KEENAN: One of the ways -- one of the
14 ways you do that is you create a library of the
15 resources. And then, there is -- there are templates
16 that can be developed which a community could look at,
17 that the governing officials, law enforcement could
18 look at and answer certain questions which would direct
19 them to the specific resource and help them develop
20 their policies.

21 You're exactly right. This has to be done at
22 the local level. It can't be done by the state level.

1 It can't be done by the federal level. It's got to be
2 done at the local level when we give them the tools and
3 the resources and guidance on how to make decisions.

4 And we've done this in many different products
5 with the criminal intelligence coordinating council of
6 having a recommendations document which asks questions
7 and then gives directions. If you're going to do this,
8 these are -- these are things you need to consider.

9 MR. COX: I would just add to that. You know,
10 I'm applauding the "see something, say something"
11 campaign that has been going on for several years.

12 But if you notice the trend in our country,
13 people are calling the cops for everything. We're
14 asked to do a lot of things that we shouldn't even have
15 to be dealing with.

16 So it would be my recommendation that we come
17 up with some sort of public service announcements to
18 educate our community on what they're looking for. I
19 mean, you know, when I tell people see something, say
20 something, I say and tell me what you see. So, you
21 know, it won't be any confusion.

22 And I've also started to recommend that we

1 train our call-takers to kind of ask more questions, to
2 get exactly what we need because over time recently in
3 the last several months, we've seen police officers
4 dispatched to calls that they should not even be
5 involved in. And it's creating a divide in our
6 country.

7 So in order to try to bring that a little bit
8 closer together, we've got to educate our community on
9 what they should be looking for. And I don't know that
10 we've done a good job of marketing that as well.

11 If you think about the concept of almost every
12 holiday you see the DUI commercials, you know, and now
13 we've got the don't text and drive. And everybody is
14 kind of, you know, understanding that.

15 But we have not yet sent out anything that
16 says this is what we should be looking for as it
17 relates to school violence or, you know, those types of
18 things. So that would be my add to the director's
19 comments.

20 MR. CANADY: And I'd like to add something to
21 your question also. And as the executive director for
22 NASRO, I'll try always to stay in my lane, which is

1 school-based policing and SROs. And one of the things
2 that we have not been shy about is not just suggesting
3 but saying that every school in this country needs at
4 least one school resource officer.

5 How impossible is that, I don't know. But
6 what we can do -- these are good foundational
7 principles that are within our training. And I hear
8 what you're saying about the one size doesn't always
9 fit all. And I agree.

10 But one of the things in areas that do not
11 have SROs, they could definitely benefit from training
12 because we could train the street-level officer how
13 better to respond to a school incident. And that's
14 very much needed as well.

15 SEC. NIELSEN: Thank you.

16 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Good. Thank you. This
17 has been an excellent panel and excellent afternoon.
18 We appreciate all of you and what we've learned today.
19 Secretary DeVos, would you like to have any closing
20 comments?

21 COMMISSIONERS' CLOSING REMARKS

22 SEC. DEVOS: Well, thank you, Attorney General

1 Sessions, for your leadership here today and thank you
2 again to all the panelists for your participation, for
3 bringing your expertise here and sharing your
4 specialized knowledge about proactively protecting
5 schools. It's been very insightful and helpful.

6 We are going to continue to solicit and gather
7 information from these commission meetings, from field
8 visits, from listening sessions and we encourage
9 feedback from the public.

10 Anybody who has input to give us, please share
11 it through our email address at safety@ed.gov. And
12 thank you all for sharing your time with us today.
13 Thank you to my fellow commissioners as well.

14 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Good. Secretary Azar?

15 SEC. AZAR: I just want to thank all three of
16 our panelists today.

17 It's vital that the adults in kids' lives are
18 -- whether they're school resource officers, teachers
19 or administrators or other personnel -- communicate key
20 safety information to them and to their parents in an
21 effective and collaborative way.

22 Positive relationships between law enforcement

1 officials and schools are important in keeping our kids
2 safe and our schools safe.

3 And it's been useful to hear how this can be
4 better accomplished through all of your testimony on
5 the three panels. So thank you very much for
6 participating in this process with us. We've learned a
7 great deal.

8 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Secretary Nielsen?

9 SEC. NIELSEN: I just want to thank you all.
10 I appreciate the first panel, the second panel. Thank
11 you. And again, I hope that you will stay in touch so
12 that we can use you as a resource to continue to ask
13 questions as we go forward.

14 One element we didn't talk as much about today
15 is exercises. And I'd love to work with you a little
16 on that. I grew up in Florida and we exercised for
17 fire and tornados and hurricanes, how to run
18 alligators, what to do with a snake bite.

19 But all of that training still stays with me
20 today. The training really makes it automatic. And I
21 think the role that students can play in such exercises
22 also helps them feel safe and know what to do. So we'd

1 love your good guidance on that as well. Thank you.

2 ATTY. GEN. SESSIONS: Great. Well, this has
3 been a very good session indeed, and thank you all. I
4 do know that there are quite a few repositories of
5 information that could be valuable if all collated
6 together to help us identify children who are in
7 trouble and need some help.

8 We've got the juvenile courts. They're very
9 secretive of what goes on. We've been proud of that
10 tradition. You've got the police departments also
11 maintain confidentiality. You've got the school
12 systems have their rules and regulations.

13 The mental health community has its rules and
14 regulations. So does the health community and other
15 institutions have privacy rights. So in a reasonable
16 way, we need to I think understand what the law
17 actually does bar.

18 Sometimes I think we think it bars more than
19 it does. But on occasion, we may need to alter some of
20 the rules and statutes too.

21 Thank you for this day. Thank you for your
22 work. And let's all continue to strive to make our

1 schools safe. Thank you.

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3 (Whereupon, the meeting was concluded.)

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I, MICHAEL FARKAS, the officer before whom the foregoing proceeding was taken, do hereby certify that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction; that said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.



MICHAEL FARKAS

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I, BENJAMIN GRAHAM, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from audio to the best of my ability.

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.

August 6, 2018

DATE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Graham", is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Benjamin Graham

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