

Statement of James “Mo” Canady
Before the Federal Commission on School Safety
“Proactively Protecting Our Schools”
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
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**Secretary of Education DeVos, Attorney General Sessions and Members of the
Federal Commission on School Safety.**

Thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the National Association of School Resource Officers. It is my honor to serve as the Executive Director for this outstanding group of law enforcement and education professionals. NASRO is a not-for-profit association founded in 1991 with a solid commitment to our nation’s youth. NASRO is comprised of school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators, and school security and safety professionals working as partners to protect students, faculty and staff, and their school communities. The “school resource officer” (SRO) refers to a commissioned law enforcement officer selected, trained and assigned to protect and serve an educational environment. I cannot emphasize enough how critical it is for officers to be *carefully* selected and *specially* trained to function in the school environment. This is always a factor in the success or failure of the SRO program.

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

The role of the SRO should utilize the triad concept of school-based policing, in which an SRO functions in a school environment in three capacities: (1) as a Law Enforcement Officer, (2) as a Teacher or Guest Speaker, and (3) as an Informal Counselor or Mentor. These strategies should be based on a set of well-established best practices, which NASRO has spent nearly 28 years crafting. The NASRO Board of Directors recently commissioned a group of dedicated association members to create a formal document of standards and best practices for school resource officer programs. On July 13th, 2018, this important document was completed. Today, the Federal

Commission on School Safety are the first recipients of *The National Association of School Resource Officers' Standards and Best Practices for School Resource Officer Programs*.

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

The first section outlines administrative standards, including an outline of the definition and purpose of an SRO and recommendations for the composing of a thorough memorandum of understanding between a law enforcement agency and a school. An SRO should be a sworn, certified law enforcement officer assigned to a community-based policing program and actively working in a collaborative effort with the school district. When this definition is followed, the SRO program serves at a tremendous benefit to its school community. However, when the definition is not adhered to, the SRO program's effectiveness will, at best, be greatly hindered, and, at worst, be significantly detrimental to the school, the law enforcement agency, and the community. The number one goal of any successful SRO must be to "bridge the gap" between law enforcement and youth. Positive relationships between students and SROs lay a powerful foundation for the exchange of information. These relationships, along with those the SRO builds with the school administration and with parents, can and have averted acts of school violence before a shot is ever fired.

The second section speaks to the importance of the selection process. The SRO position is a unique assignment in law enforcement, and it requires a unique officer to properly serve in it. Due to the nature of the assignment, the SRO will become one of the most well-known officers in the community. The officer selected for this position must have law enforcement experience, be of good moral character and have a sincere willingness to work with students.

The third section outlines the essential details of an SRO's specialized training. Once the officer has been carefully selected, it is then critical that he or she be specifically trained to work in a school environment, in the triad approach. Every SRO should attend and complete NASRO's Basic SRO Course, which includes topics such as: Foundations of School Based Policing, Understanding the Teen Brain, School Law, and Emergency Operations Plans. An SRO's training must be ongoing as educational trends and school culture change and should include topics such as: Adolescent Mental Health, Threat Assessment, and Active Shooter Response.

The final section highlights the make-or-break importance of interagency collaboration between the school district and the law enforcement agency. Proper collaboration between school officials and SRO's will most definitely be effective in preserving the campus from disruptive forces while nurturing and protecting youth who are compelled to attend school. This collaboration should be formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding.

As "The World's Leader in School Based Policing," NASRO has regularly spoken to the critical need for national standards for SRO programs. We are proud to have authored this important document, created in the furthering of our mission to keep every school and every student safe.

We urge you, The Federal Commission on School Safety, to support these recommended standards. Thank you.