FEDERAL COMMISSION ON SCHOOL SAFETY
PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION

Wednesday, JUNE 6, 2018

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20202

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APPEARANCES

COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES:

Scott Breor
(Director, Protective Security Coordination Division, U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

Todd Klessman
(Infrastructure Security Compliance Division, U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

Elinore McCance-Katz
(Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Meredith Miller
(U.S. Department of Education)

Kent Talbert
(Senior Policy Advisor to the Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education)

Beth Williams
(Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Policy, U.S. Department of Justice)

Mick Zais
(Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education)

Jessica Hart
(U.S. Department of Justice)
Welcome / Purpose of Commission
Dr. Zais, Deputy Secretary of Education, welcomes attendees to the first listening session of the Federal Commission on School Safety, formed by the president in the wake of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Secretary DeVos has called for the nation to come together to address underlying causes that create a culture of violence. Based on concerns by students, parents, and educators that something similar might happen in their schools, President Trump instructed agencies here to work with states and local schools to improve school security, expand access to mental health programs, and invest in violence prevention. The Commission is charged with identifying best practices and providing actionable recommendations to keep students safe. Primary responsibility for the physical security of schools rests with states and local communities. Public discussions and listening sessions will assist states and communities to develop solutions.

Introduction of Agency Representatives
Dr. Zais introduces agency representatives. Beth Williams, represents the Department of Justice (DOJ). Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz, represents the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This morning, Scott Breor represents the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This afternoon, DHS will be represented by Todd Klessman.

3/28/18 Commission Organizational Meeting Plans
On 3/28/18, the Commission held an organizational meeting to begin planning their work. They decided to host a series of meetings, site visits, and listening sessions over the next several months to provide a forum for subject matter experts, individuals affected by school violence, and other key stakeholders to provide input and testimony. The Commission will host four formal commission meetings over the next four months.

5/17/18 Meeting Hosted by Commissioner DeVos
Prior to the first formal Commission meeting, Commissioner DeVos hosted a 5/17/18 meeting and discussion to hear from survivors and family members affected by the mass shootings. Field visits will involve travel to schools and other sites to observe and learn about best practices in school safety.

5/31/18 Field Visits
The first field visits occurred on 5/31/18 at Frank Hebron-Harman Elementary School in Hanover, Maryland. Commission members and
their representatives heard from administrators, principals, teachers, students, and a national expert on the positive behavioral interventions and support program, a framework designed to improve social-emotional and academic outcomes for all students.

7:19 – 8:5  
Listening Sessions and Written Recommendations
Listening sessions will be held in several regions of the U.S. to provide opportunities for the general public to be heard. Everyone is encouraged to send their insights and recommendations to the email address safety@ed.gov

8:6 – 9:22  
Agenda and Schedule
Dr. Zais explains today’s schedule, procedures, and agenda, including order of registered speakers, who will provide their views on how schools, districts, institutions of higher education, and other local and state agencies can improve school safety. The event is being live-streamed and a transcript will be posted at ed.gov.

PUBLIC LISTENING SESSION
MORNING SESSION

CONGRESSMAN JOHN RUTHERFORD:

10:1 – 11:2  
Law Enforcement Background
Congressman John Rutherford served in law enforcement for 41 years, twelve of those as sheriff. Violence in the schools must stop and students must feel safe in their classrooms. As sheriff, he did not want to be the first responder to a mass casualty event. He wanted to prevent the event before it occurred. Security requires a multilayered approach, beginning with prevention.

11:3 – 12:10  
2018 Stop Schools Violence Act
In cooperation with the Sandy Hook Promise Group and others, Rutherford introduced the “Stop Schools Violence Act of 2018” in January 2018. That act, signed into law in March 2018, focused $100 million annually in federal resources through the DOJ on preventing school violence in four ways. First, it implements programs to train students, teachers, and officers of the warning signs of an individual with a propensity to become a violent school shooter. Second, it provides anonymous tip lines to authorities for teachers, students, and officers with information. Third, it creates networks between law enforcement, educational administrators, and the mental health community, which is an important working relationship developed within schools. Fourth, it provides for safety through the hardening of the target by utilizing crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), which includes armed security in schools.
12:11 – 13:11 Distribution of Funds from Stop Schools Violence Act
Rutherford and 60 of his House colleagues recently sent a letter to the DOJ, asking for their quick action to get the grants to states, localities, and tribes as soon as possible, so they may implement effective and thoughtful proposals before students return from summer break. A sluggish bureaucracy must not be allowed to slow things down. He appreciates the administration’s continued attention to school security, including creation of the School Safety Commission.

13:12 – 14:7 Research Re Shooters’ Motivations
Officials need to look at why individuals go back to their school to kill fellow students. They should look at what is going on in the individual’s home and school environments, and overall community environment. He believes students return to schools to kill because they perceive the school as the source of pain in their lives. His bill focuses on identifying those individuals before they feel a need to strike out against classmates.

14:8 – 15:5 Project Safe Students
In Jacksonville, Florida, “Project Safe Students in Schools” focused on the most disruptive students in a school in order to identify them for services. They wrapped a lot of services around those individuals and serious student misconduct dropped by 43% in the first year. School resource officers worked with the school and mental health community.

EVIE UNSWORTH (Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, COPAA):

15:6 – 15:18 Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Evie Unsworth is appearing on behalf of the COPAA, a nonprofit organization of parents, attorneys, advocates, and related professionals whose members work in communities across the U.S. to protect the civil rights and secure excellence in education on behalf of the 6.8 million children with disabilities.

15:19 – 17:7 COPAA Recommendations Re Students with Disabilities
Since it is the Commission’s charge to keep students safe at school, COPAA urges the commission to expand its membership to include public school parents, teachers, and students who represent the schools for which recommendations will be made. It is well-documented that students with disabilities are significantly and disproportionately impacted by harsh disciplinary actions taken in schools. Students with disabilities comprise 12% of the student population, but represent 24% of students who are expelled, 51% of students harassed or bullied, 66% of all students secluded, and 71% of all students restrained. Each of the children reflected has been on the receiving end of harsh bullying or disciplinary action, most likely the result of discrimination and bias. Students of color with disabilities experience the highest rate of exclusion. Most out-of-school suspensions are for minor infractions of school rules, such as disrupting class, tardiness, and dress code violations versus serious violent or criminal behavior.
Compliance with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

States are falling short in their obligation to monitor school districts in meeting all obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including the law’s requirements for manifest determination requirements, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, and more. COPAA is concerned that, in the case of disciplinary removal, schools are not adequately providing functional behavior assessments and intervention programs. Too often, the behavior intervention programs are sloppily written and poorly implemented.

Development of Strategic Plans to Manage Behavior

With the staggering number of disciplinary actions taken towards students with disabilities, it is clear that districts know they have the right under current law to develop their own programs to manage behavior. Existing guidance on school discipline has helped states and school districts develop programs to incorporate a wide range of strategies that reduce misbehavior and maintain a safe learning environment, including provision of training for school teams in conflict resolution, restorative practices, counseling and mental health services, and the implementation of school-wide systems of positive interventions that research and practice show are effective. Without those tools, the most vulnerable children will return to being at greater risk for suffering from isolation, rejection, stigmatization, and criminalization.

Support Services for Students with Warning Signs

Exclusionary approaches, such as suspension and expulsion, too often result in alienated young people without the skills to survive in society. Students who display warning signs or dangerous behaviors need appropriate services and supports versus exclusion and rejection. There is no evidence that eliminating the protection of the civil rights of students with disabilities or students of color will reduce school shootings. Instead of focusing on the elimination of the actions of the previous administration, this administration should focus on strengthening and improving it. COPAA reminds the Commission that what the federal government says and does matters. Rescinding the current discipline guidance will harm the most vulnerable children. COPAA asks that the Commission not repeat the “rethink school discipline” guidance and instead work to promote strong district and school-wide positive behavioral support programs.

EDWARD CLARKE (Executive Director, Maryland Center for School Safety):

Maryland Center for School Safety

The Maryland Center for School Safety was created by the Maryland legislature following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Its mission is to have a coordinated and comprehensive approach to school safety and security for all Maryland schools, public and private. Issues of school safety and emergency preparedness are complex. Recent and ongoing school shootings have shaken everyone to the core.
On 3/28/18, a student at Great Mills High School shot and killed a fellow student, Jaelynn Willey. Clarke thanks the U.S. DOJ for supporting the Great Mills school community and awarding them a Project SERV grant to help on the path to recovery. Such grants are helpful to students who have experienced crises and shootings.

School safety is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone needs to work together to identify best and promising practices. They need to increase physical security at schools, while ensuring a supportive climate and culture, proper critical incident response training for staff, students, and parents, and a shared commitment for school safety and security. Officials need to do a better job in the area of mental health for students and others who may be a pathway of targeted school violence, through prevention and intervention efforts. Clarke hopes that federal funding and resources are available for use by schools to ensure the collective mission of creating a safe and supportive learning environment, where all students can obtain a high-quality education.

Clarke encourages the Commission to reinstate the readiness and emergency management grants available from early 2000s through the mid-2000s, which helped school districts across the country to be better prepared for a multitude of emergencies and crises, with an all-hazards approach to school safety and emergency preparedness.

23:13 – 22:22  Safe to Learn Act
Working with the legislature, Maryland Governor Hogan enhanced school safety and security with passage of the “Safe to Learn Act.” It provides funding for school safety and security, as well as training of school resource officers and security staff throughout Maryland, focusing on mental health improvements for students.

22:23 – 23:14  Joint Safety Efforts
Clarke looks to federal partners to work with states and local communities to ensure that all schools, public or private, operate in a safe, supportive environment. If he or the Maryland Center for School Safety can be of assistance, he will be available.

LESSIA MODJARRAD (Senior at Poolesville High School, Montgomery County, Maryland):

23:15 – 24:16  Commonsense Gun Legislation
Alessia Modjarrad, graduating senior at Poolesville High School in Montgomery County, Maryland, is a student organizer with MoCo Students for Gun Control. Since the Parkland shooting in February 2018, students like Modjarrad have been at the forefront of the movement for gun control. They are asking for universal background checks, bans on high-capacity magazines, a lift of the Dickey amendment, mental health care reform, and more. The current administration put forth a few policy points, but efforts have been misguided and insufficient. In order to get a
policy with real meaning behind it, legislators must amplify students’ voices. Students experience the school systems daily. They used to wait for things to be done, but they are now using their voices and it is time for the Commission to listen.

24:17 – 25:17 Concerns Re Conditions at Schools
Modjarrad does not want to worry that someone could walk in with a gun at any moment and hurt everyone. She does not want to go to college in August and have to worry that her 14-year-old brother might be a victim to a preventable death. If the Florida shooter had not been able to legally obtain an assault rifle, 17 students and teachers would still be alive in Parkland. According to a Mother Jones database, in the past 30 years, 82% of weapons used in mass shootings were obtained legally. She wonders why guns are allowed to fall into the hands of dangerous people and why the government is so strongly influenced by NRA-backed lobbyists at the expense of American lives. Victims of mass shootings in Sante Fe High School and elsewhere were not killed by doors, trench coats, or a lack of school resource officers.

25:18 – 26:11 Gun Ownership and Violence Statistics
No other country has the same issue with school shootings that the U.S. has, because no other country in the world has the same proliferation and culture of guns as the U.S. There are 112.6 guns for every hundred people. The only other country with over 40 guns for every 100 people in the top 100 countries in GDP per capita is Switzerland, a country with mandatory military service and extremely strict laws on storage and use of firearms and ammunition. To say that guns and shootings are not linked is preposterous. Every other country has doors, video games, mental illness, and psychoactive medications. Only the U.S. has a gun violence epidemic within its schools.

26:12 – 27:9 Approach to Resolving Gun Violence
Gun violence and its relation to school safety requires a multifaceted, intersectional approach. Students will take their power to the polls this year and every year until their fight is met with comprehensive legislation that makes schools safer, not death traps or prisons. Secretary DeVos indicated that guns are not part of the Commission’s charge. Modjarrad requests the Commission to consider the possibility that guns are the most important aspect of this issue. She also requests that DeVos and the Commission take on the burden of positive, everlasting change from school children and heavily reconsider their current complicit stance on the role of guns in school safety, in order to do what is right for America.

PAM CHAMPION (Be a Champion Foundation):

27:10 – 28:15 Background Re School Violence and Safety
Pam Champion is representing “Be A Champion Foundation.” In 2011, her child was murdered at a university. She is aware of the impact of violence in our schools. In the wake of her son’s murder, she created the Robert D. Champion Drum Major for Change Foundation, which focused on eradicating violence within educational institutions. In 2015, they
initiated the “Be A Champion Foundation,” which extended their efforts in providing proactive solutions to prevent violence, using their six-pathway approach to championing peace and well-being. In 2014, they met with Arne Duncan in Washington to provide proactive proposals to the same issues being addressed today. They gained his insight and approval and were able to make a small impact with seminars and virtual sessions.

28:16 – 30:5 Clarification Re School Safety
Students are inundated with violence and few messages to counteract it. They are under tremendous emotional, psychological, moral, and mental assault in school. What is deemed as school safety needs to be expanded and clarified, including what it looks like in various communities or to students with disabilities. For all schools and communities, police presence or armed teachers do not equal safety. Regardless of whether a teacher, security, or police have guns, that presence defines the school as unsafe. Children need to feel emotionally and socially safe. Safety efforts should not be made only in response to a mass shooting or violence, but should be preventive and ongoing. School districts, institutions of higher learning, local and state government agencies, parents, and students should view school safety not just as the absence of violence. It should create and promote the concept of creating safe, positive solutions for schools to build emotional and social tolerance.

30:6 – 30:21 Curriculum Criteria Re School Safety
When implementing preventive safety measures, officials must consider sensitivity to the school’s cultural differences and to what safety means to students of various disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education should mandate antiviolence education as part of the curriculum. Institutions of higher education must educate teachers, school guidance, and social workers how to identify, handle, and work with violence.

MYRNA MANDLAWITZ (School Social Work Association of America):

Myrna Mandlawitz is with the School Social Work Association of America (SWAA), which represents school social and other professionals across the U.S. who provide direct mental health and support services to students and consultative services to staff. They connect students and families with school and community resources. They work in schools with clinical licensure and a minimum of a master’s degree in mental health services. School social workers believe that the spate of gun violence in schools is a public health issue, both tragic and preventable. SWAA supports school softening, not hardening. They prefer to talk not in terms of school violence, but rather focus on prevention and development of a positive climate for learning for every student.

31:22 – 32:7 Criteria for Positive School Climate
Developing a positive school climate involves fostering mutual respect among students and adults. That means having caring, highly-trained adults, including school social workers, school psychologists, school
counselors, school nurses, and other specialized support personnel in every school. It means having a strong team in place to develop a positive social environment.

32:8 – 33:1 SWAA Recommendations
SWAA has submitted written recommendations to safety@ed.gov, encouraging expanded access to mental health services in schools. They strongly believe that funding for both the Department of Education and SAMHSA programs must be maintained and increased to ensure school and community-based services are available for all children who require them. SWAA also supports a focus on prevention, early identification, and early intervention, as well as school-wide initiatives, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports. They want to address bullying, violence, anger management, and other social and emotional issues that impede learning early, before larger problems develop.

33:2 – 33:12 Crisis Plans in Schools
SWAA also recommends developing good crisis plans in schools, including detailed communications strategies, drills, and training for students, to ensure that all students are able to be safe in an incident. They are very concerned about what happens to students with disabilities during an incident. A good crisis plan should include recovery for students and staff, should such an event occur.

33:13 – 33:22 SWAA’s Opinion Re Police and Security Guards
The SWAA opposes more police and security guards, because they believe research has not proven that this makes schools safer. In some instances, students of color and students with disabilities have been disproportionately subjected to harsh discipline. However, SWAA recognizes that well-trained school resource officers can and do play a vital role as part of a comprehensive school safety plan.

33:23 – 34:12 Arming of School Staff
SWAA opposes any attempt to arm school staff. Social workers and other school personnel do not want to be feared as armed guards. They want to focus on instructional roles and supporting sustainable school safety. Further recommendations were submitted through the website.

AMELIA VANCE (Future of Privacy Forum):

34:13 – 35:8 Future of Privacy Forum
Amelia Vance is the director of education for the Future of Privacy Forum (FPS). In her previous role at the National Association of State Boards of Education, she co-authored a report on school surveillance, privacy, and equity, proposing a framework for schools seeking to ensure student safety while also protecting their privacy. She requests that any Commission recommendations include appropriate privacy guardrails around school safety measures to ensure that student privacy and equity are protected.
Surveillance Concerns
Parents trust schools with their children and want them to ensure student safety. To do that, schools must engage in some forms of surveillance, whether to keep preschoolers from wandering off, third graders on task, or prevent or identify instances of bullying or potential violence. As technology has evolved, schools have an increased ability to monitor students continually, in and out of the classroom. School are using services such as social media monitoring and digital video surveillance linked to law enforcement and visitor management, to protect students. Those can be effective tools, but can also harm students if there are no appropriate measures in place to regulate and guide their use.

Use of Surveillance to Reduce or Prevent School Violence
Many recent state school safety proposals include surveillance as a tactic to reduce or prevent future school violence. Florida’s new law creates a database combining data from social media, law enforcement, and social services agencies. The Texas school safety plan proposes combining local, state, and federal resources to scan and analyze not only public student social media posts, but also private or direct messages and information exchanged in private chat groups or via text messages, to determine which students are threats. Individual districts and states can and should set their own policies as to whether and how to monitor students and protect school safety. Privacy guardrails are necessary, so parents and students can be reassured that their rights will be protected.

Negative Effects of Surveillance
Vance believes the negative effects of surveillance should be considered. Research shows that surveillance can undermine a student’s sense of safety, creating a prison-like or big-brother-is-watching environment. Students are still maturing and need to know schools are safe spaces where they can ask questions, think creatively, and make mistakes. Increased surveillance can create a permanent record that can limit a student’s future opportunities. Those effects can be mitigated by adopting privacy protections, such as those laid out in the fair information practice principles or her report.

Policies Re Data Collection in Surveillance
Any surveillance that is undertaken should have policies about what data is collected, why it is collected, and how the data will be used. Privacy should never get in the way of preventing school violence.

FERPA Policy
In the wake of the Virginia Tech shooting, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) was amended to clarify when information can be shared during a health or safety emergency, but that was not enough. Districts have shared that they need more guidance as to when they are able to report potential safety threats. Not enough teachers are aware of what FERPA allows. The Department of Education’s privacy technical assistance center has been vital for schools seeing practical guidance on FERPA. The commission should recommend that PTAC public guidance and provide more technical assistance on that issue.
Targeting of Data Collection
Schools across America look to the Commission’s recommendations to guide their decisions around safety and surveillance. The Commission should recommend that programs or proposals to collect and analyze additional student data be targeted at the most serious threats to school safety. If applied broadly to less serious violations of school rules, the programs could overwhelm school administrators with data, cast suspicion on students who show no signs of violent behavior, and fail to promptly identify individuals who pose genuine threats to school safety.

Transparency in Data-Driven Initiatives
FBS recommends that the Commission urge schools to be transparent about their data-driven safety initiatives. Trust is a crucial pillar of school communities. Student opportunities should not be limited by either school safety concerns or by violation of their privacy.

CHELSEA CRITTLE (Tufts University):
Impact of Race and Gender on Behavioral and Cognitive Outcomes
Chelsea Crittle is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in the social psychology area at Tufts University. Her research focuses on how race and gender impacts behavioral and cognitive outcomes, including racial bias and discrimination. As a social scientist, she is excited to relay empirical research that might infer the Commission’s next steps. She is concerned by the quest for quick solutions to address such a wide-scale societal problem.

Effectiveness of Armed School Guards in Reducing Shootings
The scientific community currently knows very little about the effectiveness of armed school guards in reducing school shootings. The Parkland school shooting anecdotally suggests that the presence of armed personnel does not automatically ensure the deterrence of school shootings or protection against active shooters. Despite a lack of understanding regarding the efficacy of armed personnel in decreasing school violence, schools have been adopting more security measures over time.

Racial Disparities in School Discipline
When attempting to understand the impacts of law enforcement in schools, the Commission must consider the extreme racial disparities in school discipline that adversely impact Black and Latinx students compared to their white counterparts. Social psychological research has shown that, within the context of schools, race influences how teachers interpret specific behaviors and increases the teacher’s likeliness to detect patterns or misbehavior over time. Minority students are more often subjected to exclusionary discipline, which includes suspensions and expulsions, and disparities in discipline do not closely relate to actual behavioral differences amongst children.
Impact of Discipline Disparities on Students
For Black and Latinx students, disparities in discipline may lead to a mistrust of teachers and other school authority figures, feelings of doubt as to whether they belong in the school environment, and lower academic, behavioral, and social outcomes.

Impact of Police Interactions on Black and Latinx Students
Within the context of police interactions, social psychological research has shown that race influences misperceptions of weapons in split-second decision-making by police officers, in addition to an increase in officers’ response speed and decisions to shoot. Black and Latinx Americans are more likely than white Americans to view police negatively and more likely to anticipate being judged and treated unfairly by police. Merging what is known about school discipline and police interactions, Crittle can reason that placing armed individuals in schools could more disproportionately and adversely impact Black and Latinx students. If the goal is to foster a safer environment for all students, the Commission should consider the impact of race when choosing a solution.

Reliance on Law Enforcement Re School Discipline
Policies that rely on law enforcement to address school discipline have been shown to lead to an increase in referrals to the juvenile justice system. They run the risk of having schools resemble criminal justice institutions rather than safe and healthy school environments.

School Shootings as Byproduct of Larger Social Issues
School shootings maybe a byproduct of a larger scale societal issue involving, but not limited to, access to guns and toxic masculinity. Government officials, lawmakers, and scientists need to address the root causes of those events, rather than focusing on one symptom. School shootings are rare and school violence overall has shown a decline over the past several decades, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education. What has increased is the school-to-prison pipeline and the criminalization of schools, which negatively impacts the life outcomes of Black and Latinx students.

Policies and Programs for Safer Schools
When considering school safety, it is imperative to consider the safety of all school children, especially those who have been disproportionately harmed by police-involved interactions and exclusionary discipline practices. It is important to be confident that the policies will work as a result of rigorous scientific training. Crittle asks the Commission to invest in a solid, proactive, data-driven initiative for fostering safer school environments for all students.

AUDRAE ERICKSON (Local Parent):

Concerns Re Student Safety; Presence of SROs
Audrae Erickson is testifying as a concerned parent. When asked by a school-aged reporter what was being done about mass shootings in schools, Sarah Sanders choked up. Every parent deals with fears for the
safety of their children at school. Erickson has three students in public schools. She wants full-time coverage by school resource officers (SROs) to protect the safety of students at all levels. Some schools have no SROs and some have only part-time SRO coverage. Many SROs are allowed to work four ten-hour days, leaving students vulnerable if a tragic event occurs on their day off. Every school should have an SRO on premise whenever schools are in session.

45:11 – 46:13

Prevention of Weapons at Schools
Erickson believes all schools must prevent guns and knives from entering school buildings. School faculty members could be routinely present and strategically stationed in all hallways before school and during peak times of students’ movement in and out or around the building. Parent volunteers who have received complete training and screening can provide an additional presence of authority as needed and act as extra sets of eyes and ears during peak periods. Second, she believes active social media monitoring of students, with the help of leading social media platforms and message app companies could be an early detection mechanism. Tip lines in the form of school-based apps can be set up for students to report concerns or issues at any time to school officials, anonymously if desired. That app should have full-time coverage by designated school officials seven days and evenings per week.

46:14 – 47:17

Prevention of Weapons at Schools (Continued)
Erickson would like to see unannounced random and periodic backpack checks and/or metal detector screening, even with handheld scanning wands, at school entrances to serve as a deterrent. All stakeholders in a school community should be involved in that school’s safety plan. In-person meetings, conference calls, and Internet-based access could increase involvement. Such meetings should be held at least twice annually by the principal administrator with parents, students, SROs, teachers, and other stakeholders to make sure everyone is aware of the school’s safety plan and has an opportunity to offer suggestions for improvement. Finally, significantly more resources and funding should be committed to increase school safety and ensure that principals and SRO officers have the necessary tools to keep students safe.

GILLIAN HUEBNER (Montgomery County Council of PTAs):

47:18 – 48:11

Subcommittee on School Climate and Safety
Gillian Huebner serves as the chair of a subcommittee on school climate and safety with the Montgomery County Council of PTAs, which represents the families of more than 160,000 students in 205 schools. They are the largest school district in Maryland. Huebner is also an international child protection expert and has worked over 20 years on issues related to child development and protection, including as an advisor on those issues with the U.S. government.
48:12 – 49:9  **Safety of U.S. Students**
Huebner has worked and lived in a number of war zones. She left her life as a frontline humanitarian worker to raise her children in a safer environment. Her children are at greater risk here in the U.S. than they would have been had she stayed in Angola, where she witnessed the end of a war and ineffective demobilization process whereby combatants handed over their weapons in favor of a nonviolent future. The evidence shows that violence against children is preventable. That choice must be a priority, but the U.S. has been unwilling to make it. American children know that they are not a priority, which has devastating effects on their sense of security and safety, their ability to learn, and their mental health and well-being. The U.S. is failing them.

49:10 – 50:4  **Prevention of Gun Violence in U.S.**
The MCC PTA stands behind student leaders who demand that more is done to protect them. MCC PTA applauds their strategic, principled leadership and looks forward to the power and purpose of their votes. The PTA has joined hundreds of national organizations in support of the call to action to prevent gun violence in the U.S. Although security measures are important, a focus on simply preparing for school shootings is insufficient. There must be a change in mindset and policy from reaction to prevention, which begins long before a gunman might come to school. They want a comprehensive approach to gun violence that is informed by science and free from partisan politics.

50:5 – 50:14  **Level One Steps for Protection of Students**
On the first level, Huebner recommends a national requirement for all schools to assess school climate and maintain physically and emotionally safe conditions in positive school environments that protect all students and adults from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and assault. The U.S. needs a ban on assault-style weapons, high capacity ammunition clips, and products that modify semi-automatic firearms to enable them to function like automatic firearms.

50:15 – 51:5  **Level Two Steps for Protection of Students**
On the second level, schools need adequate staffing, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers of coordinated school and community-based mental health services for individuals with risk factors for violence, recognizing that violence is not intrinsically a product of mental illness. School discipline reform is needed in order to reduce exclusionary practices and foster positive social behavior and emotional and academic success for students. Universal background checks should be instituted to screen out violent offenders, people who have been hospitalized for violence towards self and others, and people on no-fly terrorist watch lists.

51:6 – 51:20  **Level Three Steps for Protection of Students**
On the third level, MCC PTA believes there is a need for a national program to train and maintain school and community-based threat assessment teams that include mental health and law enforcement partners. Threat assessment programs should include practical channels
of communication for people to report potential threats, as well as interventions to resolve conflicts in troubled individuals. MCC PTA contends that well-executed laws can reduce gun violence while protecting all constitutional rights. Federal and state authorities must take immediate action.

AMANDA LOWE (Senior Public Policy Analyst, National Disability Rights Network):

51:21 – 52:17 National Disability Rights Network’s Recommendations
As senior public policy analyst at the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), Amanda Lowe believes the importance of safety in schools for America’s 50.8 million K-12 students, as well as that of students attending institutions of higher education, cannot be overstated. NDRN believes it is important to maintain the 2014 discipline guidance, to implement what they know works to improve school climate and safety, and to ensure that any potential hardening of schools adequately considers students protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504.

52:18 – 53:16 Protection and Advocacy of Individuals with Disabilities
NDRN is a non-profit membership organization for the federally-mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) agencies for individuals with disabilities. P&As were established by Congress to protect the rights of people with disabilities and their families. They are in all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories. A P&A is affiliated with the Native American Consortium in the Four Corners region of the Southwest. Collectively, the P&As are the largest provider of legally-based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the U.S., including students protected under both the IDEA and Section 504. In 2016, P&As worked on nearly 14,000 individual cases and hundreds of systemic cases related to enforcing the educational rights of students with disabilities, as well as advocating for the rights of students with disabilities who belong to more than one protected class.

In 2014, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice issued a non-regulatory guidance package providing information and support to schools and districts for help both in complying with the U.S. civil rights laws and creating safer and more welcoming schools for all students. This guidance does not create new legal requirements for schools, nor does it remove tools that schools use to ensure safety. It does not instruct school districts to ignore safety issues, prevent or delay referral to law enforcement, or prevent the removal of truly dangerous students from school. Civil rights and due process protections promote and increase a positive school climate and safety. If the guidance protecting children from unnecessary school removal is rescinded, the stakes are high. NDRN strongly recommends that critical guidance and related documents remain in place.
54:15 – 55:13  NDRN’s Publication and PBIS Intervention
In 2009, NDRN published “School’s Not Supposed to Hurt,” which documented the widespread abuse and death of students in U.S. schools, due to inappropriate use of restraints, seclusion, and aversives. NDRN publicly advocated for the widespread implementation of positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) as a way to effectively address behavior issues. NDRN supports PBIS, a school-wide, data-driven system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive environments. The efficacy of PBIS is well-documented and represents a fundamental paradigm shift in how adults in schools approach behavior. PBIS is specifically mentioned in both IDEA and the umbrella term, multi-tiered systems of support, mentioned in ESSA.

55:14 – 56:3  Whole-School Approaches to Behavior; Mental Health Services
Two other whole-school approaches to address behavior are restorative justice and trauma-informed practices. The efficacy of those approaches towards improving school climate and safety is well-documented in the research. Those approaches are not mutually exclusive and can be part of a broader school-wide PBIS model. Access to quality school and community-based mental health services provided early and in appropriate quantities minimize and, in some cases, prevent altogether adolescent and adult mental health needs.

56:4 – 57:3  Accessibility to School Sites; Training of SROs
NDRN recommends that if hardening approaches are considered, whether through SROs or hardware installed in schools, that those not reduce accessibility to the actual physical premises or free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment for all students protected under IDEA and Section 504. All SROs must be trained on how to appropriately interact with all students covered under those laws. Any door locks or safety devices must be accessible for all students. School lockdown or evacuation drills must take into consideration the needs of students covered under the IDEA and Section 504. NDRN will answer any questions and provide additional written comments to the portal.

AMINA HENDERSON-REDWAN (Voices of Youth in Chicago Education):

57:4 – 58:4  Personal Background and Experience Re Violence
Amina Henderson-Redwan works with Communities United in Chicago, Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, and Good Kids My City. She joined those movements because she and her peers experience firsthand the school-to-prison pipeline and violence in their community. She is a 20-year-old African-American Palestinian woman, born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. At age nine, she watched her father die. She has lost loved ones to gun violence in Chicago, including her best friend, shot and killed on his way home on 2/18/18. She was arrested in school when she had an anxiety attack. She tried to walk away from a peace circle and a security guard pushed her head into a chalkboard. She battles anxiety and bipolar depression on a daily basis. She is not defined by her issues. She is not a statistic of a failed system. She never lost hope.
Work to End School-to-Prison Pipeline
In her sophomore year of high school, Henderson-Redwan joined Voice, a statewide coalition led by youth across Illinois who work to end the school-to-prison pipeline. Her group has passed legislation in Illinois that collects data on exclusionary discipline and SB 100, which eliminates zero tolerance inside of school. Last week, they passed a bill that is currently sitting on the governor’s desk, which creates a competitive grant which all Illinois school districts can apply for, to create and expand their mental and behavioral health services, e.g., drug and alcohol treatment training for staff, conflict resolution, restorative practices, and other trauma-informed approaches to meeting students’ developmental needs.

Experience Re Legislation
In Henderson-Redwan’s five years advocating for legislation, she has seen a bill die on the floor because of one vote. She has cried and seen her peers cry. She has risen at 5:00 a.m. to take a 7:00 a.m. train after only three hours of sleep, to educate Illinois legislators as to what it means to be safe inside their schools. Organizations like Voice and Communities United are in the forefront of creating legislation for safer schools. Illinois is modeling what it means to listen to groups on the ground regarding safety, especially for students of color.

Typical Response to School Shootings
The typical response to tragedies such as Parkland or Sandy Hook is to harden the schools. For students like Henderson-Redwan, safety does not mean more police, metal detectors, and armed teachers in schools. Safety means getting to the root causes of a student’s behavior, more conflict resolution, alternatives to arrest, and supporting students’ mental and behavioral health. The Commission needs to listen to communities like hers, which it is supposed to represent.

MARILYN TILLMAN (Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School-to-Prison Pipeline):

Lack of Transparency Re Notice of Listening Sessions
Marilyn Tillman is with the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School-to-Prison Pipeline (Gwinnet SToPP). She finds a lack of transparency and intentionality in the Commission’s setting up listening sessions. The timing of the notice was not conducive for parents and youth to be included on a topic that impacts them directly. The three proposed upcoming session dates and places have yet to be announced. She implores the Commission to give proper notice, so the community can fully participate and they can hear from a set of diverse voices. If the Commission leans into the discomfort, everyone will benefit.

Georgia Laws Regarding School Safety
Tillman is from Georgia, which has a law permitting local boards to arm teachers, while holding the systems harmless for the consequences of their actions. One Georgia teacher brought a gun to school and barricaded himself in the classroom. Georgia has laws that state school police should have training, but failed to set up training standards. Gwinnet County Public Schools had a contact quota for SROs.
61:19 – 62:3 Diversity Awareness Training
During the diversity awareness training that Tillman’s organization facilitated for the SROs, an officer assigned to one of their most diverse schools lamented that he does not like that people who come into this country are not assimilating and will not conform. That impacts the officer’s interactions at the school.

While school shootings are primarily committed by white students at white schools, the schools with large black and brown populations get the brunt of school police and buildings that resemble and function like prisons. There is no evidence that police make schools safer. School safety cannot be the hardening of schools, adding police, or setting up the school for a gun battle at the OK Corral by arming teachers. Any definition must include emotional safety. In order to thrive, children must be emotionally safe to learn at school. According to civil rights data collected by the Education Department and the GAO, who analyzed the data, students with disabilities and black and brown students are disproportionately impacted by overly punitive discipline. Students in those groups are not emotionally safe to learn while at school.

63:1 - 63:13 Emotional and Physical Safety of Students
There must be a proactive and holistic approach to school safety, one that creates a climate and culture of care and nurturing, where students are emotionally and physically safe to learn. It is necessary to invest in evidence-based violence reduction strategies that engage all community stakeholders and have been proven effective, such as utilizing peacekeepers instead of police, restorative practices and transformative justice. Resources like counselors, improved school facilities, accessible after-school programs must be utilized to help students better connect to school. When students are connected, their parents connect.

63:14 – 63:21 Role of School Police
School police have moved from protecting children to policing children. Police should be called when needed, not patrolling the halls. Policing has been shown to disproportionately criminalize youth of color and students with disabilities. School-based arrests and referrals to law enforcement increase when police have a regular presence in schools.

63:22 – 64:7 Other Recommendations to Change School Culture
School police must understand cultural competencies, including understanding and addressing racism, sexism, homophobia and all other -isms and explicit or implicit biases. Mental health access that is not necessarily managed by the school should be offered in a process that provides seamless connection for those who need it. Gun laws should be changed because there is no need for military-grade weapons in the hands of everyday citizens.
Locations of Listening Sessions
Tillman recommends holding future Commission listening sessions in areas where impacted communities reside or where OCR maintains a regional office. Do not leave out native and rural communities, whose voices at the table are long overdue.

DEBORAH ZIEGLER (Council for Exceptional Children):

Council for Exceptional Children
Deborah Ziegler is the director of policy and advocacy at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the educational success of children and youth with exceptionailities that accomplish its mission through advocacy, standards, and professional development.

Opposition to Arming Teachers
CEC strongly opposes arming teachers and school personnel because it has no empirical support and is an ill-conceived and counterproductive idea with potential for making schools less safe. Possession of a firearm in school should be limited to carefully selected, specially trained school resource officers. All students are entitled to a safe and positive school climate and environment conducive to learning without fear. Teachers and school personnel have the right to safe working environments, free from violence. The nation must come together to enact comprehensive policies and practices that support school and community safety and protection, along with commonsense gun violence prevention methods.

CEC’s Approach to School and Community Safety
CEC supports an approach to school and community safety that addresses both preventative and response and is rooted in research and evidence, that addresses mental health services for children and youth and confronts the stigma of such challenges. The approach should ensure an adequate number of personnel trained to address the complex needs of children and youth with mental health challenges. School safety policies must use an interdisciplinary approach that reinforces a partnership between education, juvenile justice, mental health, social welfare, law enforcement, and community engagement systems.

Mental Health Recommendations
School safety policies must require implementation of evidence-based practices that address prevention and response while ameliorating the stigma associated with mental health challenges. They should focus on the impact of mental health challenges on children and youth’s social, educational, and employment outcomes. The Commission should confront and remedy the national shortages of special educators and specialized instructional support personnel trained to address the complex needs of children and youth with mental health challenges. CEC continues to advocate for policies and meaningful actions, not only to address violence in our nation’s schools and communities, but to create evidence-based solutions rooted in safety, prevention, and interdisciplinary approach.
MARIA ELENA MORENO VAN MAREN (Parent at a public school):

67:17 – 68:22 Positive Discipline
Maria Elena Moreno Van Maren believes that a program should be created to support and practice positive discipline with students. When it comes to supporting security in schools, she believes that those who attack schools do so because they do not feel warm love or attention. She looked at how the school system disciplines children. Those people were children and they have views about how others have views. She has had her own experience with school discipline. If a child is emotional, he or she is sent to a very big person who screams more. The kids are depressed and need social and emotional support. Positive discipline means teaching appropriate respectful behavior, essential in relationships with children, but not was Van Maren sees in the school system.

68:23 – 70:7 Problems with Current School Discipline Systems
The discipline system that Van Maren has observed in schools is not education. She feels it is very hard on children and only teaches them violence and suppresses their emotions. She wants a program that supports teachers and children in the social and emotional area. Whatever happens now creates the future. Children are “diseased from the future” because of the school environment. The problem is not the children. The problem is the adult teachers who are there all day with the students. She would like to see a wonderful, beautiful classroom with materials to help the children relax. Colleges and therapies help children in a relaxed environment where they can express their feelings and be at peace and comfortable socially and emotionally.

70:8 – 70:22 Partnership between School Administration and Parents
Another problem Van Maren observed is that school administrators are very separated from the parents. They do not support or listen to parents. She would like to include in her program something to facilitate working as partners to support cities for the future.

NELL NG (AASA and Other Agencies):

71:1 – 72:3 Commission Process and Outcome
Nell Ng of AASA, is appearing on behalf AASA, as well as the Association of Educational Service Agencies, the Association of School Business Officials International, the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, the National Rural Education Association, and the National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium. As the Commission moves forward in its work to achieve its stated goal of quickly providing meaningful and actionable recommendations and best practices to keep students safe at school, it is critical that it ensures both the process and outcome are very meaningful to all Americans, particularly school system leaders charged with ensuring that students feel safe and supported and that school buildings are the safest places for students to be.
Ranking of Areas of Study by School Leaders

This week, Ng shared the list of the commission’s potential areas of study and recommendations with school leaders nationwide and asked them to rank the listed items in terms of what would be most relevant to their shared goal of keeping students safe at school. The top three areas that superintendents and education leaders want the Commission to address include opportunities to improve access to mental health treatment, best practices for school-based threat assessment and violence prevention strategies, and best practices for school buildings and campus security from federal government components. The item that school leaders are least interested in having the Commission address is the appeal [sic; repeal?] of the Obama administration’s rethink school design policies.

Recommendations Re Improved Access to Mental Health Services

In terms of improving access to mental health, AASA and the other agencies recommend the following, some of which is drawn from “Futures without Violence: Safe, Healthy and Ready to Learn” report from May 2015. The U.S. Departments of HHS and Education should provide detailed guidance on how community-based mental health providers and other social service providers can receive information from schools and vice versa about students’ physical and mental health needs while remaining in compliance with federal privacy laws. Flexibility should expand in all reimbursement mechanisms for behavioral and mental health that recognize the principle of the right treatment for the right person at the right time. CMS should use innovation funding to encourage states to implement best practices and reimbursement strategies to support the mental health needs of children.

Correcting Shortages of Trained and Licensed Providers

The AASA and referenced agencies recommend that the Commission should address shortages of trained and licensed providers who can best meet the mental health needs of children, including child and adolescent psychologists, psychiatrists, and developmental and behavioral pediatric specialists. The department should issue grants to states to develop programs to educate teachers, school personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel in mental health conditions in children.

School-Based Threat Assessment and Violence Prevention Strategies

In order to develop and share practices for school-based threat assessment and violence prevention strategies, Ng’s group recommends that the Commission create specific school violence prevention goals and develop metrics for meeting those goals.

Creation of Websites Re State and Local School Districts

The administration should create two distinct websites that serve as a portal for states and local school districts. The first should focus on learning how to apply for grants focused on school safety. The second should focus on best practices for school-based threat assessment and violence prevention strategies, as well as best practices for school buildings and campus security. The administration should have a technical assistance center dedicated on a first-come, first-serve basis, to
review a district’s school-based threat assessment systems. They also recommend the development and operation of anonymous reporting systems for threats of school violence, placement and use of metal detectors, locks, lighting, and other deterrent training and security training of personnel and students.

75:7 – 75:12 School Safety Now Versus Past
A comprehensive approach is necessary to prevent future school violence. Schools remain the safest place for children. Today’s schools are considerably safer than they were 20 years ago. Over the last decade, the number of schools reporting an incident of violent crime fell by more than 20%.

75:13 – 77:1 Reduction of Gun Violence
Despite successful efforts by school districts to reduce gun violence, 3,000 children and teens are killed by guns and 15,000 are injured outside of schools each year, far more than children in any other major industrialized country. A solution to prevent the killing of innocent youth cannot be the sole responsibility of the school community. Agencies represented by Ng do not believe that we can make our schools armed fortresses. They oppose efforts to bring more guns into schools by arming teachers and administrators. Until they eliminate easy access to weapons and address limited access to mental health care, the conditions that allow the continued horrific murder of educators and children in schools will continue. To prevent future tragedies, school safety, gun safety, and mental health must be comprehensively addressed with adequate time and resources.

MICHAEL YIN (Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association):

77:2 – 79:7 Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association
Michael Yin is one of two U.S. Presidential Scholars from Maryland and this school year’s president of the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association. He is appearing on behalf of 161,000 students of his county, the largest school system in Maryland and one of the 15 largest in the nation. He graduated from Montgomery Blair High School 24 hours ago. The eight students killed at Sante Fe High School, the 16-year-old from Great Mills High School in Maryland, the students of Huffman High School, Marshall County High School, Wake Forest University, and 14 students from Stoneman Douglas High School will never walk across that stage. Those lucky enough to graduate from those schools will never be the same.

79:8 – 78:22 Students’ Perceptions of Schools
Students know and feel that something is very wrong in their schools. Every time their superintendent releases a public statement at the recent unthinkable tragedy, students know it is not unthinkable. It is expected. They feel it when incredibly brave survivors of school shootings, such as David Hogg and Emma Gonzalez are dismissed and attacked because students do not know what they are talking about. They feel it when their younger siblings are unwilling to attend school, not because of tests or
Students are speaking out because their futures are on the line and they are ready to incite change and find a solution.

**Students’ Actions for Change**
Students have appeared on the news debating policy with as much vigor and hard-earned wisdom as seasoned reporters. Nearly a million students marched for their lives in D.C. and half a million marched elsewhere in the U.S. and internationally. Students are doing their best but need help from the Commission. Yin is asking the Commission to listen to students, teachers, and other staff who spend every day in school. Everyone wants to end the tragedies. Politicians have come up with some good ideas, but they need to listen to those closest to the school system and not be dismissive.

**Arguments against Arming of School Staff**
Yin is concerned about the idea of arming school staff. One teacher stated on Twitter, “I knocked myself out head-butting the ceiling pretending to be a particle. I’ve set my arm on fire when lit ethanol trickled down my sleeve. Please don’t give me a gun.” Every teacher Yin knows agrees. Schools cannot be turned into prisons and teachers into guards. There is a limited role for trained professional SROs, but a school full of guns is a tragedy waiting to happen.

**Role of Firearms**
Devos stated that the school safety commission will not look at the role of firearms. Yin understands that people are worried about their Second Amendment Rights and that changing gun laws would be hard. But much can happen that does not impinge on the Second Amendment. He would like to see closure of the gun show loophole that allows private parties to sell guns without asking for ID. Authorities need to do a better job of making sure guns do not get into the hands of the wrong people, whether domestic abusers or people with mental health problems. He believes the Commission should look at guns. It would show great courage for the Commission and administration to make our schools, students, and entire country safer, even when it is about guns.

**Other Issues Re School Safety**
Students across the nation would like to see school-wide tip hotlines and infrastructure improvements, as well as have counselors who interact with their students at least once a semester, which is rare. Some students go every day without having their names called or being spoken to by a staff member. Yin hopes the Commission will keep listening to the students to find a solution.

DR. ZAIS (Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education):

**Clarification Re Gun Issues**
According to the Congressional Research Service, there are about 300 million guns in America. Dr. Zais clarifies that the Commission will not be looking at ways to confiscate those weapons or abrogate the Second
Amendment. They will be looking at specific age limits for the purchase of specific types of weapons and also examining legal procedures for the confiscation of weapons from people with identified mental health issues.

LINDSAY JONES (National Center for Learning Disabilities):

82:22 – 84:2 National Center for Learning Disabilities
Lindsay Jones is the VP and chief policy and advocacy officer for the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), a nonprofit organization that works to improve the lives of the one in five students with learning and attention issues in schools nationwide. Learning and attention issues include reading and math disabilities, e.g., dyslexia and dyscalculia, writing disabilities, e.g., dysgraphia, and attention disorders. It was formed by and is run by parents. For the past 40 years, NCLD has provided essential information to parents and families, professionals and individuals with learning disabilities and attention issues, most recently through their website, understood.org. They promote research and programs to foster effective learning and advocate for policies to protect and strengthen educational rights and opportunities.

84:3 – 84:19 Impact of School Climate and Discipline on Students with Disabilities
As other speakers have indicated, in discussions of issues of school climate and discipline, they must recognize the disproportionate impact those issues have on students with disabilities, particularly students of color with disabilities. Nothing about having a disability of any type should mean that one is disciplined or bullied more often, but that is not the case. Students with disabilities, especially students of color with disabilities, face disparate treatment in our nation’s public schools. They are more than twice as likely to be suspended as other students with disabilities, according to the Department of Education’s civil rights data collection.

84:20 – 85:13 Disparate Treatment of Students with Disabilities
More than one-quarter of African-American boys with disabilities received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to one in ten white boys with disabilities. Students with disabilities account for about 12% of the public school population, but 25% of arrests at school. Students with learning disabilities in reading, writing, math, etc., are also 31% more likely than their peers without disabilities to face bullying. Behavior does not explain the disparate rates of discipline faced by these students.

85:14 – 86:10 2014 Guidance by Departments of Education and Justice
The 2014 guidance issued by the Departments of Justice and Education related to school discipline and Title VI is an important tool for schools and must be maintained. Jones was pleased to hear Ng emphasize that it was the least important her members wanted changed. The guidance was meant to help educators address bias in discipline practices, improve day-to-day strategies, and uphold student civil rights protections in our schools. It provides educators with actionable tools and strategies to improve practices and foster a more equitable and welcoming school environment for all students. It should be preserved.
Impact of Hardening Measures on Schools

Hardening schools by increasing police presence, installing metal detectors, or allowing teachers to bear arms is not the answer. Jones has evidence that those types of hardening measures may perpetuate existing problems and worsen treatment of and outcomes for students of color and students with disabilities. A report by the National Association of School Psychologists found there is no evidence that using metal detectors, security cameras, or guards in schools prevented school violence. Instead, they can have a negative impact on students’ sense of safety, in particular historically disadvantaged students like those of color or with disabilities. Increasing police presence may actually further the disproportionate treatment.

Recommendations for Proactive, Evidence-Based Strategies

The NCLD urges the Commission to invest in proactive, evidence-based strategies to improve school safety and climate. Jones is pleased to see that the first visit of the Commission focused on positive behavior implementation and supports (PBIS), which fosters a positive school climate and is evidence-based. It has been working for students with disabilities and others for over two decades, but is still not in most schools. The “Every Student Succeeds Act” has already authorized and approved funding for PBIS under multi-tiered systems of supports and under the IDEA. Improving and increasing that practice should be a key priority for the Commission. There are clear ways forward through the issues facing schools today. The shared experiences of the disability community can shed light on how to improve school safety.

DONNA MAZYCK (Executive Director, National Association of School Nurses):

Health and Safety Issues Impacting Students

Donna Mazyck is the Executive Director of the National Association of School Nurses. School nurses must deal with a third-grade student who asks a trusted teacher if she is safe from violent intruders in school. She must also coordinate students, families, school staff, and community providers in the management of chronic health conditions like asthma, anaphylaxis, and epilepsy in order to support students’ safety and learning. She has to press past the frustration with social factors that impacts the health of children and youth. School system leaders have to help children in their districts feel safe, as well as meet the social, physical, and emotional needs of students. The National Association of School Nurses envisions school communities where students are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. That requires a mindset that is followed by evidence-based prevention and intervention.

National Association of School Nurses

The National Association of School Nurses is a professional membership association. They know that a healthy school environment begins with a student-centered, collaborative approach by leaders within schools and communities. The whole school, whole community, whole child model centers on the whole child and incorporates ten components vital for a healthy and safe school environment. School health services is one
component. The school nurse is a key leader who promotes and enhances student safety, wellness, engagement, and learning.

90:9 – 91:5 Need for Multidisciplinary Team to Guide School Climate
The third-grade student who is anxious about her safety relies on the trusted teacher, who in turn looks to the school administrator, who convenes a multidisciplinary team to make sure they are prepared for emergencies. They include community partners and they plan, mitigate, train, and practice responses to their plan. The specialized instructional support team, which includes school nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers, focus on the counseling, psychological, social, and emotional climate of the school. School shootings threaten the safety and wellbeing of students and school staff. A multidisciplinary approach, including research, enables comprehensive and coordinated prevention, early identification, and early intervention.

91:6 – 91:22 Duties of School Nurse
The school nurse is a leader and integral partner in developing plans for first aid, facilitating evacuation, caring for students with disabilities, performing triage, educating and training staff, and providing surveillance and reporting. She is an effective communicator and educator responsible for sharing information about health risks and connecting students and families to providers who can offer immediate crisis care and support and refer to appropriate mental health services for long-term support. By assisting with the management of chronic health conditions, the nurse contributes to risk reduction, increased classroom time, decreased student absenteeism, improved academic success, and cost savings to families and educational and healthcare systems.

91:23 – 92:11 Behavioral and Physical Complaints
School nurses are educated to identify physical complaints that are co-occurring with behavioral health concerns. They are often a student’s first point of entry into behavioral health services. School nurses are also part of the day-to-day school experience and are easily accessible to students seeking assistance with behavioral health issues. They believe that early identification and intervention regarding mental health concerns are necessary for safe schools.

92:12 – 93:12 Impact of Wellness Committee
A new district school nurse organized a wellness committee to oversee implementation of wellness policy activities in her district. Parents, school superintendent, principals, school nurses, school staff, and community members participated. They completed the CDC’s school health index, a self-assessment and planning tool. The committee gained information that helped them to learn the school’s strengths and growth opportunities. The next step involved identifying recommendations to foster a healthy and safe school environment. NASN believes those self-assessments are important to ensure that students are healthy and safe in schools. NASN will provide specific recommendations at the email address.
JAMISON COPPOLA (American Association of Christian Schools):

93:13 – 94:18  **American Association of Christian Schools**
Jamison Coppola is representing the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS), a nonprofit organization of private Christian schools organized in 37 states and regional associations, with schools across America. His group prays to find solutions to the sobering reality that our children are victimizing each other in the very places that society has dedicated to their growth, care, and nurturing. Each new report of school violence brings with it the reality that something is truly broken and must be fixed. His group grieves with the families, teachers, and friends who have lost loved ones or had their lives permanently changed by violence perpetuated by classmates.

94:19 – 95:20  **Spiritual Dimension to School Safety**
In times of crisis, pragmatic concerns of the movement drive the conversation for immediate practical solutions, such as hardening school soft spots, having armed guards, improving security practices, and developing interventions for troubled students. The AACS encourages the Commission to remember there is a spiritual dimension to this problem. Issues of the heart affect behavior. School safety will best be achieved in an environment that teaches virtue and expects noble character. In *The Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis described hardhearted people as “men without chests.” He diagnosed an educational system that did not teach virtue or character as, “In a sort of ghastly simplicity, we remove the organ but still demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.”

95:21 – 96:16  **Pursuit of Virtue in Education**
The Greeks understood that the best education was in the pursuit of what they called the good, the true, and the beautiful. That is the goal of all education. The U.S. must return to the idea that those values are worth pursuing in our schools and classrooms. They need a common standard that is actively taught in schools, as to what virtue is and encourage students and all citizens to pursue those virtues in their actions. As a group of Christian schools, his group believes those virtues are best revealed in the life of Jesus and recorded in the Bible. They encourage the pursuit of virtue, but understand more can be done to prevent such tragedies from occurring.

96:17 – 97:4  **Best Practices Re Security**
The AACS encourages the Commission to look to the private school community, which has pursued many best practices in facility security, including things like digital surveillance and building access, routine safety drilling, the arming of responsible members of the school community, as well as ongoing training and updating of safety protocols, while increasing community awareness through communication safety strategies that include parents, teachers, and students.
Inclusion of Private and Faith-Based School Communities

Many worthy ideas have been shared. AACS encourages the Commission to make clear that, as solutions are provided, the commission remind local law enforcement and education agencies to include the private and faith-based school communities in their planning and preparations, and to also include parents, the primary educators of children, private school leaders, and students who wish to participate in those programs. The best solutions will be found in cooperation between local law enforcement, local security professionals, and local private and public-school communities where those solutions are implemented.

MARY KINGSTON ROCHE (Institute for Educational Leadership):

Community School Strategy

Mary Kingston Roche of the Institute for Educational Leadership, is the director of public policy for the Coalition of Community Schools, an alliance of over 200 national, state, and local partners who pursue the mission to unite school, community, and family for young people's success. She will share how the community school strategy can bring a community together to help keep students safe. She urges the Commission to recommend this strategy in any guidance they release. Adequate security is essential, but not enough to keep students safe and prevent more school shootings. They must ensure that they are meeting every student’s needs, emotionally and physically, and that they create for students a sense of belonging in their schools, that they have at least one caring adult in their lives, and that they are engaged and challenged.

Function and Purpose of Community Schools

The community school strategy fulfills all referenced goals, as the school partners with a community to provide those supports and opportunities and become the hub where people come together to support students to succeed. Four essential practices are implemented: integrated student support that meets the social, emotional, and physical needs of students; enriched and extended learning time and opportunities, offering a student-centered curriculum emphasizing real-world learning and extending into after-school and summer; family and community engagement that incorporates parents' voices into decision-making and offers family support and enrichment; and collaborative leadership, which distributes leadership to integrate student, parent, and community voice into decision-making. The work is guided by a community school coordinator who leads the process of an assets needs assessment, then facilitates community partnerships to supplement the work of the school to meet the needs and interests to help students succeed.

Turnaround of Unsafe School in Austin, Texas

In 2003, Reagan High School in Austin, Texas was seen as unsafe after one student stabbed another student to death. Trust was lost and enrollment declined. The graduation rate was under 50% and the district threatened to close the school. A committee of parents, teachers, and students presented a plan to turn Reagan into a community school, which the district accepted. After engaging the school community through a
needs assessment, the school designated a coordinator, implemented the community school strategy, and is in a completely different place today. It partnered with Austin Community College to adopt the early college high school curriculum and established a student-led youth court with University of Texas at Austin Law School, as well as a restorative justice program. Discipline issues have been dramatically reduced. The school started with ten volunteers and mentors and now has over 100.

Five years after adopting the community school strategy, Reagan is graduating 85% of students, enrollment has doubled, and it is a safe, nurturing place.

Ward 8 Elementary Community School
At a community elementary school in Ward 8 last year, nine people overdosed on the school steps and a person was shot and killed across the street. The parent organizers first met with the mayor and city council to petition to move the bus stop, to prevent such activity from occurring right outside the schools. When it comes to keeping students staff, they must bring schools and communities together to tackle the issues.

Implementation of Community School Strategies
Roche urges the Commission to highlight community schools as an effective strategy to achieve school safety and help students feel loved, valued, engaged, challenged, and ready to learn. She wants the Commission to recommend that states and districts leverage eligible ESSA funds to implement community schools in support of school safety, especially Title IV, Part A, the student support and academic enrichment grant, where the investment in a coordinator to achieve the goals of the grant is referenced in ESSA. She recommends that Commission members visit a few community schools over the coming months, to see the work in action. She will coordinate those visits, which will illustrate the practices and indicate how they customize their approach according to their unique school community.

ZAKIYA SANKARA-JABAR (National Dignity in Schools Campaign):

Dignity in Schools Campaign
Zakiya Sankara-Jabar is with the National Dignity in Schools Campaign, an organization made up of over 120 members in 26 states and D.C. Members are mainly parents and students, but they also have policymakers, lawyers, and educators. As the parent of two Black children in Montgomery County, Maryland, this issue is important to her, both professionally and personally.

Addition of Police and Arming of Staff
The Dignity in Schools Campaign believes that funneling more money to police and arming school staff is not the answer to preventing violence in schools. They believe it is best to invest in counselors, social workers, restorative justice coordinators, community intervention workers, peacebuilders, and other supportive school staff who actually create safer schools. There is no evidence that armed personnel or additional police in schools creates a safer school environment. Armed police were present at Virginia Tech, Columbine, and Parkland. According to an FBI study, the
majority of mass shootings end when the shooter decides to end them, not by intervention from law enforcement. It harms the entire school environment, including parents, teachers, students, and staff.

105:6 – 105:21 Students of Color at Risk
Students are already facing violence from armed and unarmed law enforcement in their schools and communities, including fatal and life-threatening injuries. An NYPD study found that even trained police can miss their targets more than four out of five times in gunfire. Students of color, particularly Black students, face the greatest risk. School-based arrest rates and corporal punishment are much higher to Black and Latino students. Studies have shown that subjects are more likely to shoot black students in split-second situations. The nation has seen the consequences of that. An increase in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments in schools also create an unsafe environment.

105:22 – 106:10 Impact of Police on Discipline in Schools
Police in schools tend to get involved in school discipline, often escalating incidents that might have been resolved by a principal or counselor. Having police in schools and punitive school cultures make it less likely that students will trust adults in the building or come forward with concerns about other students. For immigrant and undocumented students, bringing police into schools may lead to deportation for themselves or their families.

106:11 – 107:9 Recommendations for Safe School Environments
For real safety, preventing violence in schools requires both long- and short-term solutions. Social and emotional learning and restorative justice teach young people how to manage their emotions and respond to conflict in healthy ways. Counselors, wraparound services, and strong relationships with caring adults are what struggling students need. It keeps students who may need intervention from falling through the cracks. Entrances and halls should be monitored by supportive school staff, community intervention workers, and peacebuilders who know the student body and come from the same communities. They can address issues based on relationships. SROs are police, not counselors or social workers. Students deserve trained mental health professionals. Telling a student to go to an SRO for counseling is counterproductive and false.

107:10 – 108:5 Police and Mental Health Support at Parkland
At the Parkland shooting, four armed police on site did not prevent or end the shooting. The shooter had previously interacted with police many times and was the subject of tips to the FBI and police on 17 occasions. The Broward County superintendent said that, following the shooting, mental health support in Broward was insufficient. The Dignity campaign believes that social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and transformative justice create safer schools.
HASHIM JABAR (Racial Justice NOW!):

Hashim Jabar is interim director of Racial Justice NOW!, based in Dayton, Ohio, with a satellite office in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to dismantle structural and institutional racism in all areas of people activity. Their primary focus is on the institution of education and lifting up the voices of disempowered Black parents and children. They are dedicated to stopping the school-to-prison pipeline and focusing specifically on holding institutions accountable to equitable distribution of services and resources to Black people in Dayton, Ohio, and around the state.

A 5/19/18 Washington Post article was headed, “Texas school had a shooting plan, armed officers, and practice. And still 10 people died.” There is no research, information, or evidence suggesting that more police in schools would create a safer environment. Mass shootings do not occur in the urban, black and brown schools. An attempt to solve a suburban, aka white or Caucasian problem, by adding police in schools would be extremely problematic, based on the relationship between black students and police officers.

109:15 – 110:13 Dignity in Schools Website Documents Re Counselors, Not Cops
As part of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, Jabar’s group believes in counselors, not cops. Three documents are posted on the Dignity website: “Counselors, Not Cops: Ending the Regular Presence of Law Enforcement in Schools”; “A Resource Guide on Counselors, Not Cops”; and a document that was a joint issue brief between the Advancement Project, Alliance for Education Justice, Dignity in Schools, and the legal defense fund of the NAACP, following the Newtown school shootings. The “Counselors, Not Cops” campaign seeks to end the regular presence of law enforcement in schools, to create safe schools through positive safety and discipline measures, and to restrict the role of law enforcement that is called into schools. Data shows that positive alternatives to law enforcement in schools keeps students safe. Police presence in schools has increased over time and contributes to the criminalization of young people, specifically black and brown people.

110:14 – 110:20 Impact of Police Presence in Schools
Regular police presence in schools results in more arrests for nonviolent offenses that would otherwise be addressed by school personnel. Police and SROs can contribute to a criminalizing, unwelcoming, and otherwise unsafe environment in schools. There is no reliable research demonstrating that SROs keep schools safe.

110:21 – 111:14 Impact of Law Enforcement in Schools on Students of Color
Students of color are impacted at higher rates by law enforcement in schools. The Dignity website has all documents showing that students need counselors, not cops. They need to be addressed mentally, psychologically, socially, and emotionally in the classroom. Resources should not be used to bring more police into schools, but to prevent
students from taking actions and to help them become productive citizens. When youth attend school, metal detectors and being wanded give the nonverbal message that they are criminals in a police state, not at school. Learning is to benefit society, not simply to just get a job and stay out of jail.

111:15 – 113:7 Educational Levels in U.S.
America is at a unique point in history. In the movie, “Hidden Figures,” three or four Black women contributed to NASA and America’s going to the moon. North Korea, Singapore, and other areas have higher levels of education. As America’s education slips, they have to consider how many scientists and mathematicians are sitting behind bars, based on small crimes. Jabar’s group believes in counselors, not cops, and ending the school-to-prison pipeline.

SARAH MANCOLL (Private citizen):

113:8 – 113:19 Research Re School Safety Measures
Sarah Mancoll is the policy director of a scientific association in D.C., but is appearing as a private citizen and mother. She emphasizes the importance of considering research evidence when making decisions on what school safety measures to endorse. Schools need to know what does or does not work. A colleague from Bloomfield, New Jersey recently told Mancoll that her school board had decided to place armed guards in elementary schools. The district was following the lead of other schools after the Newtown shootings. Research evidence on the efficacy of armed guards in schools toward creating a safer school environment is lacking. Without such quality evidence, how do they know they are not causing more harm than good? Successful measures to promote school safety may be intuitive, but they may also be counterintuitive.

113:20 – 115:5 Recommendations Re Research Sources
As the Commission moves forward, Mancoll encourages them to place importance on research evidence. There is excellent basic and applied research that is being funded and conducted across the federal government, including at the National Institute of Justice, the Institute for Education Sciences, Centers for Disease Control, Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and National Science Foundation. The research includes studies on the effect of bias on police use of force and on school discipline, the effects of social and emotional learning programs on student behavior, and other outcomes and studies on the association between school climate and student learning. Those agencies also collect valuable statistical data used by states and localities to inform decision-making. It is important work and the U.S. needs more high quality and rigorously-conducted, evidence-based research to understand what works and inform decisions.
DR. EARL FRANKS (National Association of Elementary School Principals):

115:6 – 116:5  Goal of NAESP Re School Safety
Dr. Earl Franks is the executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), an organization that provides advocacy and support to the nation’s elementary and middle level principals and other education leaders, and their commitment to children. As a former teacher and school principal, he has always believed that student safety is the top priority, because a student cannot learn if he does not feel safe. Parents agree that their children’s safety is the most important factor. Since the tragedy at Stoneman Douglas high school, NAESP has pushed for a non-partisan, comprehensive approach to improving school safety and mental health services in schools.

116:6 – 117:10  Research-Based Policy Solutions and Meaningful Change
School safety and student well-being are complex issues. The nation must find research-based policy solutions that lead to meaningful change, beginning with those involved with education on a daily basis. The NAESP believes that the key is to leverage work that has been done by many organizations, education-related and otherwise. They hope that the Commission will collaborate with NAESP to identify and elevate strategies and policy recommendations, and identify solutions to improve school safety and access to mental health in schools. A collaborative process can unite all groups to support policy development and implementation, ensure a comprehensive approach, and improve alignment of federal, state, and local policies. Like many organizations appearing today, NAESP has developed resources and tools to advance work around school safety, which they will share to address key questions.

117:11 – 118:10  Questions Re School Safety
NAESP’s first question involves answering “What should a comprehensive, school-wide approach to improving school safety and mental health services look like?” Next, “What solutions best support effective design and implementation of programs that facilitate a multi-tiered system of supports?” The third question is, “How can the federal government, states, and districts align efforts to support the development and implementation of research-based, comprehensive school safety plans?” Last, “What are the best practices and strategies to support blending state and federal funding streams in education and mental health services?” Franks hopes that the Commission, the Department of Education, and the administration will partner with NAESP on actionable next steps to collectively create and support policy development and implementation while ensuring a comprehensive approach through the alignment of federal, state, and local policies.

BRANDON LEWIS (National Urban League):

118:11 – 119:18  Statement from President and CEO of National Urban League
Brandon Lewis, a former public-school teacher, is appearing on behalf of the National Urban League, the nation’s oldest and largest community-based organization, whose efforts are devoted to improving the lives of
African-Americans. He reads into the record a statement from Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League, regarding how to keep all children safe in schools. Morial starts by indicating there have been at least 16 school shootings since January 2018. Children in urban schools have been subjected to other forms of school violence, including discriminatory and exclusionary discipline practices, excessive and abusive practices from school resource officers, attending schools in under-resourced communities, often in buildings unfit for instruction or learning. He encourages the Commission to actively consider solutions to all of those challenges because all children, regardless of race or income, deserve to attend safe, high quality schools.

**119:19 – 120:20 Disparity in Gun-Related Homicides among Black and White Children**

A June 2017 report by the CDC and Prevention found that, between 2002 – 2014, black children were killed by guns more often than white children in America. The disparity is shocking, but what is more alarming is that the population affected has been largely ignored by lawmakers and excluded from the conversation convened by this very body. Morial encourages the Commission to identify and engage black children and teens as they begin to weigh how to protect all children from gun violence. Black children, particularly black girls, have always had a leading role in the fight for gun control. The Commission risks ignoring that key constituency that can provide valuable insight in determining solutions if their voices are not included. The U.S. accounts for under 5% of the global population, but owns 35-50% of all civilian-owned guns in the world. Estimates show that U.S. civilian gun ownership is as high as 310 million, essentially one per person.

**120:21 – 121:15 Recommendations Re Gun Control**

Morial wrote that the Commission was formed to address school gun violence, but as of today is unwilling to talk about gun control measures. Members of the Commission have openly supported the idea of arming teachers, in effect supporting the idea of putting more guns into schools. The National Urban League believes that represents a direct threat to black children and teens. Commission members have also advocated for repeal of the Gun Free Zone Act of 1990, which bans weapons in and around public and private K-12 schools. The Urban League recommends commonsense gun control measures, including stricter enforcement of existing gun laws, more rigorous and expanded background checks aligned across federal and state agencies, and new federal legislation banning military-grade weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.


The Urban League encourages the Commission to reject all calls for rescission of the current federal school discipline guidance. They believe that a return to the racially-biased school discipline practices of the past in the name of safety is both careless and irresponsible. The Urban League remains eager to engage with the Department of Education and the Commission to encourage holistic, comprehensive solutions to school safety for black children and teens.
DR. ZAIS (Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education):

122:5 – 123:5 Conclusion of Morning Session
Dr. Zais calls out the names of those who were listed as morning speakers, but failed to show up. The morning session is concluded.

AFTERNOON SESSION

DR. EVELYN CARTER (EAC Consulting):

123:6 – 123:17 Time to Teach Center of Teacher Effectiveness
Dr. Evelyn Carter of EAC Consulting is from Time to Teach Center of Teacher Effectiveness. School safety and success depends on classrooms with positive environment, free from bullying, free from confrontation, free from conflict. She has five components to promote school success.

123:18 – 124:18 Five Components of School Success
Teachers should be armed with maintaining self-control and composure in all situations to enable them to predict and avert problem situations before they surface and take the right course of action when challenged. Step two, the classroom should be arranged for maximum achievement. Keep students visually focused on top priorities. Teach them from the teaching power position. Step three, teach to and enforce rules and procedures, with lessons. Step four, be firm and be fair. Carry out disciplinary actions. Learn to stop letting minor and major challenges interrupt important teaching time. Stop avoiding difficult students or situations. Handle negative classroom situations effectively. Detect and correct problems before they surface. The fifth step is to build and maintain strong student-teacher relationships. Students need to see teachers caring. Build and maintain trust with challenging students. Energize apathetic students and have them working as never before.

124:19 – 125:3 Results from Application of Five Components
A principal from Reading, California reported that, as a result of using the five components, his suspensions dropped from 39% to 18% in a three-year period. A principal from Henderson, North Carolina reported that his office referrals went from 300 to two and suspensions from 150 to none.

DR. JOHN KELLY (National Association of School Psychology):

125:4 – 126:3 Improved School Safety and Violence Prevention
Dr. John Kelly is a school psychologist and president of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), which has played a leadership role in developing evidence-based suggestions to improve school safety and prevent violence. NASP is committed to working with this administration, Congress, and other educational policy leaders to ensure that schools and communities have the capacity to keep students safe, support their mental health needs, and foster successful learning. He encourages the Commission to reference NASP’s written statement and will leave a copy.
Creation of Safe and Supportive Schools
NASP knows a lot about what really works to create safe and supportive schools, but none of what works involves soundbite solutions, the purchase of a single program or security system, or the over-hardening of schools. Real school safety requires comprehensive, integrated, and sustained approaches outlined in the framework. It is critical to address the students’ mental health needs. Doing so is central to school safety, not just from the perspective of violence prevention, but in terms of overall student wellbeing and learning.

Importance of School Psychologists, Social Workers, and Counselors
As a high school psychologist, Dr. Kelly works to meet students’ mental and behavioral health needs. His ability to help those students has relied on his specific training and the fact that he is in the building and accessible to students and staff. Too many schools lack adequate access to school psychologists, counselors, or school social workers. Unlike community-based mental health employees, school-employed mental health professionals are specifically trained to provide services within the learning context. They understand how to work with school staff to identify struggling students and incorporate interventions into the school day. He also works closely with community providers serving students who need more intensive services. The country is facing a critical shortage of school-employed mental health professionals, as well as limited mental health resources for children and youth in the community. That is bad for kids, teachers, and families.

Boston Public Schools Model
Kelly just spent the past few days with the Boston public schools, where they have a highly effective model for addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of students. It is led by school psychologists and social workers, in partnership with Children’s Hospital and the University of Massachusetts. He will share the model with the Commission.

School Climate and Positive Relationships
School climate and positive relationships are the foundation of school safety. His students trust him and their teachers. They know they can ask for help when needed. Students need to trust that adults will do the right thing if they reach out. A key component to the trust is to balance physical and psychological safety. They employ reasonable security measures, such as locked doors, controlled building entry, use of SROs, and monitored hallways. But they do not try to turn their learning environment into a fortress.

Opinion Re Arming Teachers
Kelly does not believe that arming teachers is the answer. Doing so places an unrealistic and unreasonable burden on American educators, and undermines the sense of a safe, supportive learning environment. The nation must focus on approaches that genuinely safeguard the wellbeing of children and school staff who work to educate, empower, and protect children every day. Putting more guns in schools is not a good approach.
129:2 – 129:16 Effective Positive Discipline Strategies
Kelly works to create a school climate in which all students feel valued, supported, and connected. He uses positive discipline strategies that focus on reinforcing positive behavior, preventing and addressing negative behavior, and keeping students in school. An over-reliance on zero tolerance policies, suspension, and expulsion contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline and could put students at an increased risk for dropping out, risky behaviors, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Schools can and should address negative behaviors and connect students to necessary supports for success instead of pushing them out.

129:17 – 130:14 Multidisciplinary School Safety and Crisis Response Teams
Every district needs appropriately trained multidisciplinary school safety and crisis response teams. Ongoing training of the teams should encompass prevention and early intervention, as well as response and recovery to prepare for critical events. That includes conducting effective lockdown drills, collaborative planning with community responders, and training school mental health professionals with skills and techniques to provide quality risk and threat assessments, as well as interventions to support psychological recovery. He was on the team to reopen Stoneman Douglas in Florida and knows what it takes to create safe environments.

130:15 – 131:3 Conclusions Re Remedies for Gun Violence
The nation needs to do more to address the underlying causes of violence and enact gun safety legislation that reduces inappropriate access to weapons. The Commission needs to stay focused on evidence-based efforts that are known to work, to prevent violence and keep children safe.

ZACHARY SCOTT (National Association of Secondary Principals):

Zachary Scott serves as the senior manager of federal engagement and outreach at the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the voice of leaders and the home of millions of student leaders affiliated with the National Honor Society and National Student Council. Their members have been affected by gun violence, know the names and reams of every student gunned down in their schools. When the TV cameras leave and horrified supporters return to their regular lives, the principals remain to lead the school on the path of recovery and healing. On their behalf, Scott offers recommendations.

132:5 – 133:3 Opinion Re Arming School Personnel
The Commission must abandon the notion of arming teachers, principals, and other school personnel or eliminating gun-free zones or other proposals championed by the gun lobby, born of a belief that putting more guns in schools will make kids safer. Such proposals stem from a desperate and well-intentioned need to do something, anything to make parents and community members believe schools are safer. The effect would be the opposite because schools would be even more susceptible to acts of violence. No credible evidence suggests that more guns in
schools equals more safety. The growing number of accidental shootings and mishaps with guns in schools, even in the hands of trained professionals, says exactly the opposite. If the Commission intends to not address the role of guns in school violence, it should certainly not be advocating for the proliferation of guns in schools.

133:4 – 134:13 Maintenance of School Safety
Safety is the ultimate responsibility of the school principal, maintained by a vigilant staff and student body. They must feel empowered to report potentially violent behavior, but will only report it if the school culture is built on a foundation of trusting relationships between students and adults. Each student must feel known and valued, even those who are well-known only for their infraction of rules.

Last week, the Commission learned about the power of PBIS to both promote positive behaviors and respond to infractions in a way that maintains the student as a valued member of the school community. The same is true of restorative justice models. The 2014 discipline guidance issued by the Departments of Education and Justice promotes those models and other alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. It encourages schools to examine their own discipline data, identify disparities, ask why, and adopt policies to correct them. Scott’s organization strongly encourages the Commission to reaffirm the guidance in its final recommendations.

134:5 – 134:22 Mental Health Supports
The nation must more purposely initiate mental health supports both inside and outside of schools. That is not to stigmatize those who suffer from mental health issues, who are far more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence. They need reliable mechanisms to identify potentially violent behavior before the potential is realized. Once a risk is identified, school psychologists, counselors, and social workers can intervene to forestall the violent behavior, but also help remediate an illness and give a potential perpetrator an opportunity to live a successful life. None of his recommendations are new, but neither is the challenge of school safety. The education community has been living with the same charge given to the Commission for the past few decades.

135:1 – 136:4 2013 Framework for Safe and Successful Schools
The 2013 framework for safe and successful schools reflects the consensus of the education community, more than 100 education and law enforcement organizations. Many of the answers sought by the Commission are already known. He encourages the Commission to keep seeking new and effective practices, but to also redirect efforts towards codifying and funding the interventions already known to be effective. One of the town’s favorite strategies for making tough policy questions disappear is the blue-ribbon committee. He hopes this body will break that mold, for the sake of students and all who share the future of those students.
AMANDA FITZGERALD (American School Counselor Association):

136:5 – 136:22 **American School Counselor Association**

Amanda Fitzgerald represents the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a nonprofit membership organization representing over 35,000 school counseling professionals, most of whom work in a K-12 education setting. Through a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors work with all students in a school and implement programs that support their academic, career, and social-emotional development. Counselors deliver those services through whole-class instruction, small group lessons, and one-on-one counseling to support individual student planning.

137:1 – 137:10 **Need for School Safety Program Funding**

The recent federal investment in the student support and academic enrichment grants funded under Title IV(a) of the Every Student Succeeds Act is appreciated, but that is not a school safety program. The program funds many critical school programs, many of which are unrelated to school safety. It is imperative that standalone investments are put in place to address those urgent concerns.

137:11 – 138:14 **Increased Funding for School Counselors, Psychologists, Social Workers**

ASCA has three primary points for the Commission’s consideration. The first involves increasing funding to increase the number of school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers. School counselors provide many services, including career exploration and college access initiatives. They also are key in providing a safe and supportive school climate, social-emotional learning, and many of the tier one and universal prevention services that the Commission just learned about on its visit to a PBIS school last week. Mental health issues, exposure to trauma, and deployment of a parent are just some of the issues students face. Those issues do not discriminate based on social status, family structure, or location. It is crucial that schools are staffed with trained professionals who can increase the likelihood that struggling students are identified as early as possible and provided early interventions in schools or via referrals to community agencies.

138:15 – 139:1 **Ratio of School Counselors to Students**

ASCA recommends a school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. According to the National Center for Educational statistics, the average ratio for the 2014-2015 school year was 1:482, nearly double the recommendation. Arizona and California have ratios of 1:924 and 1:760 respectively. Secretary Devos’ home state of Michigan is third highest in the nation, at 1:729. Those rates are unacceptable.

139:2 – 140:3 **Increased Investment in Prevention and Early Intervention**

ASCA’s second request is for an increased investment in prevention and early intervention services, particularly in elementary schools. Often policy and funding are created and determined as a reaction to a tragedy. Those tragedies are becoming alarmingly more frequent. Many evidence-based programs that have significant positive results are being
implemented in schools. Research supports the value of school-wide positive behavioral support programs. When implemented in elementary schools, they can help reduce the number of behavioral referrals, suspensions, and instructional days lost, as well as identify students who may be at risk. For those programs to be effective, the entire school staff must be involved. Classroom teachers are responsible for the high-quality instruction of 20-30 students. In schools without student support personnel, they are also responsible for addressing students’ social-emotional and physical needs. School counselors and other personnel are necessary to successfully implement those plans.

140:4 – 141:3  Recommendation Re Arming Teachers
ASCA strongly opposes any effort to arm educators in schools or any proposal that would offer financial incentives for educators to carry firearms. The organization is committed to working with all stakeholders necessary to ensure students and staff are safe when they enter a school building each day. They are confident that, with swift action and an emphasis on increasing the number of state-certified school counselors, social workers, and psychologists to assist with prevention, early identification, and intervention services, that could be a reality. Fitzgerald recommends that Commission members connect with school counselors in all K-12 settings to become familiar with the work they do.

SHAUN DAKIN (Dakin Associates):

141:4 – 142:11  Data Re School Shootings and Gun Violence
Shaun Dakin is the father of a middle school student in Falls Church, Virginia and a gun violence prevention advocate who was moved to volunteer after Sandy Hook. He is a data guy with an MBA who teaches digital marketing at the university level. When he first reviewed data around school shootings and gun violence in the U.S., he was outraged. He did not realize that America’s gun homicide rate is almost 25 times higher than any other civilized nation or that nearly 96 Americans die every day from guns, 62% from suicide. Every day, almost 20 veterans commit suicide and seven children under the age of 19 die because of guns. He became a gun violence prevention advocate, working to reduce the number of gun deaths in every community and school in the U.S.

142:12 – 143:3  Lax Gun Laws
Dakin did not know that the U.S. gun laws are so lax. In Virginia, he could go on the Internet, buy an AR-15, pay cash online with no background check, license, training, or registration. He could open carry that assault weapon around his town, located ten miles from the White House, and it would be entirely legal. He did not realize how easy it is for anyone to buy any weapon in America and do whatever he or she wants. When he tells friends about these laws, they do not believe it. In order to make schools safe, gun laws must be strengthened.
Access to Guns
Dakin did not know that the majority of school shooters obtain their guns from family members or that, according to the “Asking Saves Lives” program, which is Brady and the American Association of Pediatrics, one out of three homes with children have unlocked guns. He did not know that, each day, nine children and teens are shot in gun accidents and 80% of unintentional firearm deaths occur in the home. The Sandy Hook shooter had an arsenal of guns in his home, purchased for him by his mother. According to the recent report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the leading cause of death of children ages 10-17 is suicide. That group recommends that families with a depressed teen develop a safety plan to restrict the young person’s access to lethal means of harm, including firearms.

Gun Owners’ Safety Practices and Responsibilities
Dakin did not know that many gun owners who consider themselves to be safety specialists and responsible gun owners leave their guns unlocked and unsecured in the home. If an angry young man is feeling hurt, bullied, depressed, or rejected by a girl, he may have easy access to guns. He can go to his parents’ closet and obtain murder machines. There are no real gun store laws in America and too few laws to hold adults responsible when their unsecured guns are used to murder children. A recent study by Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Bloomberg School of Public School [sic] stated that 54% of gun owners say they do not keep their guns locked in a safe room. Only 37% of gun owners in Washington State lock their guns away. The unsecured guns in the hands of angry young men lead to the murder of school children.

Gun Violence in U.S. Versus Abroad
Dakin grew up overseas. Everyone abroad watches Hollywood movies with lots of violence and plays violent American videogames. Every country has angry young men with mental health issues, but it is only in America that we arm these angry young men with deadly murder machines and make it as easy to buy as getting a Frappuccino.

Recommendations Re Gun Control Laws
Dakin knows that gun storage laws work and that age restrictions for gun purchases work. Red flag laws, gun violence restraining orders, licensing, and permitting also work. He does not know if the U.S. or this administration has the moral courage to do something significant to save children’s lives. Many solutions can be implemented to save lives.

LU ANN MACIUILLA MCNABB (Private citizen):

Virginia Tech Shooting
LuAnn Maciulla McNabb is appearing as an individual. On Sunday, 4/22/07, she kissed the exit wound on the forehead of Reema Samaha, even though Samaha’s mother, McNabb’s close friend, wanted her to focus only on her daughter’s hands, which remained untouched. Reema was one of 32 killed at Virginia Tech on 4/1/07, gunned down in her French classroom along with another young lady McNabb knew, Erin
Peterson, an only child. Everyone believes Peterson’s father died of heartbreak on 3/18/16. Samaha and Peterson would have been 30 on 6/23/18 and 8/17/18 respectively. They will remain forever 18.

147:1 – 147:12 Impact of School Shootings
McNabb has come to know the survivors of the Virginia Tech tragedy, as well as some from Columbine and Newtown. School shootings affect not only immediate and extended family, but also friends, neighbors, and communities. The young people who knew those who died will never forget and their lives have been forever changed. The number of school shootings has increased to the point where everyone prays for summer, so that students no longer fear being caught in the crossfire.

147:13 – 148:10 Recommendations
McNabb urges the Commission to encourage schools, colleges, and districts to create threat assessment teams similar to what Virginia did after Virginia Tech. The teams should include faculty, students, administrators, and other staff. Ensure that community colleges have the same access to mental health resources as the four-year colleges have. Invest in mental health funding, counselors, and research, which are as important as academics, art, and athletics. Encourage memorandum of understanding between medical facilities, schools, and colleges, so both are aware of students who go back and forth. Make sure those students receive the attention, support, and resources they need. Review balancing the privacy of students who may be a threat with the safety of the greater student body. Protecting one at the expense of all will lead to tragedy if schools and universities fear lawsuits.

148:11 – 149:13 Recommendations (Continued)
McNabb recommends that administrators, educators, support staff, and students be made aware of red flags, such as social media warnings, threatening notes, chained doors, marked changes in behavior or dress, or students who frighten their fellow students and teachers. Programs should be instituted to encourage and reward actively caring and positive behavior among all who work and attend schools. Also, they should make sure that court orders are reinforced and enforced. She would like the Commission to look into the responsibility of family members who give guns, provide easy access to guns, or fail to lock up guns when they know a family member is struggling with issues that can lead to harm. Background checks should be required on all gun purchases. Guns should only be in the possession of law-abiding citizens versus those who would do harm. School safety is comprised of many issues. Every aspect of every school shooting should be reviewed to determine how to prevent them from happening.
RABBI ABBA COHEN (Agudath Israel of America):

149:14 – 150:3 Agudath Israel of America Duties
Rabbi Abba Cohen is VP for federal affairs of Agudath Israel of America, the national Orthodox Jewish organization. In that capacity for the past 30 years, one of his primary duties has been to be a liaison on behalf of the entire network of Orthodox Jewish educational institutions, from kindergarten through higher education.

150:4 – 151:11 Threats Facing Schools
Cohen endorses much of what has been said. The threat facing America’s schools makes it critical to significantly increase the resources available for their protection. The nation needs a broad, multi-pronged approach that considers all options to addressing the threat. Like other religious and private schools, Jewish schools face dangers from within the school. Disgruntled students, teachers, administrators, parents, and workers may be found in any school. Mentally troubled individuals may live in any community connected to a school. All pose potential threats and appropriate steps must be taken to address the causes of the danger and prevent them in whatever setting found. All children deserve to learn in a safe and protected environment, whether they attend public, private, or religious schools. All types of schools have been included with recent programs implemented regarding disaster relief and other situations, and that should continue.

151:12 – 152:21 Anti-Racial, Anti-Ethnic, and Anti-Religious Bias
Jewish schools and other religious schools are more vulnerable than others in terms of anti-racial, anti-ethnic, or anti-religious bias that emanates from extremism and terrorism. Anti-Semitic fanatics, supremacists, foreign and domestic, known and unknown, have voted to bring violence specifically upon Jews and Jewish institutions in the U.S. and worldwide. Children are no less in their scopes than others. Jewish targets remain a condition of high alert. Explicit acts of violence, as well as numerous reported occurrences of suspicious and threatening phone calls have come to Jewish schools in several major metropolitan areas.

152:22 – 153:15 Internal and External Threats
Cohen requests that the Commission direct proper and effective attention and energy to schools such as his, which not only face internal threats emanating from disturbed, troubled, disgruntled individuals connected to schools, but also face very different external threats from domestic and foreign extremists bent on death and destruction. More resources are needed and they have to think broadly to protect children in all schools.

DONNA COLOMBO (Virginia PTA):

153:16 – 154:20 Goals of Virginia PTA
Donna Colombo is the president-elect for Virginia PTA, as well as a mother and grandmother of public school students. Virginia PTA has more than 200,000 members, concentrated almost entirely in public schools. Its primary goal is to build educated and engaged families, so
they may build productive and strong relationships with their schools. Part of that process involves understanding each other’s needs and how to support those needs. Above all, parents want to know that their students will be safe at school. PTAs are having important conversations and taking the lead on initiatives to guarantee school safety. Teachers, parents, administrators, law enforcement, legislators, and community members are all looking for answers.

Colombo believes that guns have no place in schools. It is far too easy for untrained and unlicensed citizens, even minors, to access firearms. Budgets are stretched so tightly that many school divisions are unable to install even the most basic security systems. School safety is a national, state, and division problem. Schools should not be made into fortresses. Each school should be guaranteed funding to install state-of-the-art security at each entrance or exit and locks on every door. PTAs are helping fund basic safety measures, because localities cannot. The responsibility to fund proper safety equipment falls squarely on the state and federal governments.

155:16 – 156:2 Addition of Guidance Counselors and Nurses
Schools do not need to be hardened. They need to strengthen the support system for students and families. Instead of adding officers, they should add guidance counselors. Each year, schools are forced to do more with less. Students in need of emotional support go unnoticed. More school nurses are cut and communities fail to reach the children.

156:3 – 156:22 Solutions Re Access and Motive
At a recent meeting of education stakeholders, a school safety expert indicated that both sides of violence must be addressed, access and motive. Trying to solve one or the other does not work. Guaranteeing a safe and nonviolent environment for a student is something on which everyone agrees. The issue of access to guns in the U.S. must be addressed. Universal background checks and licenses must be required to purchase all firearms. There should be a federal ban on assault rifles. To address the issue of motive, the U.S. must prioritize mental health education, early intervention, and funding for services and personnel. Resources must be provided to build mental and behavioral health system capacities within schools and communities, to ensure that students can receive a proactive continuum of behavioral and mental health services.

157:1 – 157:19 Ratio of Qualified Professionals to Students
Schools must be provided with necessary resources to ensure adequate ratios of school counselors, school psychologists, and school nurses who are the most qualified professionals to provide school-based mental health services. PTAs and parents around the country are demanding resources to ensure that services and security are provided equitably, so that each child returns safely each day and no parent has to worry about not seeing the child alive again.
MARY WELANDER (Sandy Hook Promise Organization):

157:20 – 158:14 Sandy Hook Promise Organization
Mary Welander is speaking on behalf of Sandy Hook Promise Organization, a national organization that is working to prevent violence in schools and communities. She is the promise leader/ambassador for the State of Connecticut. She also serves on the Orange Board of Education, the board of the PTA, and is the mother of three elementary school-aged children.

158:15 – 159:13 Mental Health Supports in Schools
Based on her conversations with her superintendent, principal, and board of education chair, Welander came up with the most important issues that they believe are being faced by schools. They discussed security measures that have already been put in place, but what consistently came up was the need for better communication and mental health supports, especially as social media has exacerbated the issues related to isolation and bullying. Schools across the country are struggling without school counselors or school psychologists needed when teachers or staff identify possible at-risk behaviors or warning signs in students. Parents are often reluctant to identify and label their child as a problem. All of the educators Welander spoke to agreed that they need unilateral programs introduced to all schools to teach inclusiveness and understanding, as well as to prevent violence.

159:14 – 160:12 Investments in Effective Prevention Programs
Investing in low-cost, effective prevention now could eliminate many problems faced in schools daily and provide a strong starting point for further evaluation. Sandy Hook Promise has trained over 3.5 million students and adults to know the signs of violence and take action to prevent it through programs that begin with younger children, such as the “Start with Hello” program, and build connectivity in schools. The program moves on to say something and school threat assessment, which empower students to know the signs of violence and help schools to identify and intervene in threats from school shootings to suicides. Those evidence-based programs, which only cost $1 per student to implement, have helped avert multiple school shootings and suicides and reduced bullying to improve the climate and culture of thousands of schools. The programs are accessible to all schools, not just those in big cities or with big budgets.

160:13 – 161:11 Recommendations
The Commission was created to address school safety, which is accomplished by creating an environment in which the issue does not exist, versus trying to mitigate the damage once it has already started. Welander’s district was fortunate to be in a position to take aggressive steps towards fortifying the hard shell of its schools. But those measures do not stop a shooting from occurring, only slow them down once started. Most schools are unable to take those steps or hire new security personnel, such as SROs. The president has indicated strong support for the Stop School Violence Act and scaling the work to all schools. The
Commission needs to spread the word about the proven prevention programs and provide funding and technical assistance so schools apply and train their students and staff to make schools and children safer.

161:12 – 162:3

**Increased Funding for Mental Health Supports**

School violence is preventable and Welander’s group has solutions that can be placed students’ hands. To do the work necessary to identify students who may be at risk of hurting themselves or others, they need to ensure that schools have a strong foundation of mental health supports, so students are given help to succeed versus being expelled. Increased funding for additional school psychologists and school counselors would make it easier to identify and help students in need, so they stay in school and do not become chronically isolated without receiving proper attention.

162:4 – 163:1

**Interaction with Children after Parkland Shooting**

The day after the Parkland massacre, Welander hugged her kids and smelled their hair for an extra moment before dropping them off at school, in case they were killed at school that day. She has a hard time processing that moment. She speaks for hundreds of Promise leaders across the country and every parent when asking the Commission to recommend an increased federal investment in both proven prevention programs and school mental health professionals to ensure that all students are trained and supported.

**CONGRESSMAN LOU BARLETTA:**

163:2 – 164:14

**School Safety Issues**

Congressman Lou Barletta is pleased that President Trump has recognized the need to address school safety. Barletta is the father of four daughters, two of whom are teachers, and grandfather of eight. Everyone has memories of elementary, junior high, and high school; they last a lifetime. Children today will grow up with a different type of memory, worrying each day if what they see happening in other places will happen at their school. No student should have to go to school in fear and no parent should worry about what might happen to them while at school. Barletta sits on both the House Committee on Education and Workforce and the House Committee on Homeland Security. When the Commission provides its recommendations to keep students safe at school, he will fight to ensure that Congress acts on those recommendations as quickly and efficiently as possible.

164:15 – 165:10

**School Security Funding**

U.S. schools are dangerously under-secured. Programs to increase school security are dangerously under-funded. As Barletta goes to work at the U.S. Capitol every day, he passes vehicle barricades. He works in a building with armed guards who carry machine guns, metal detectors, and police dogs. He and his colleagues work without fear of attack, teachers and students go to school hoping nothing happens to them. If government officials can protect themselves, they can protect students. Schools need to have the means to implement security measures that
work best for students. The federal government needs to provide the guidance and support for them to do so.

165:11 – 166:18  
**Protecting Our Kids Act**  
Barletta introduced the "Protecting Our Kids Act." The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provides federal agencies and buildings across the country with safety standards to ensure that employees are protected from any and all threats. His bill would direct the Department of Education to work with DHS to provide schools with security standards and guidelines within 60 days of becoming law, so that educators and administrators have tools they need to protect students. One size does not fit all. Security cannot be legislated to work in every school. His bill would not mandate any blanket security protocols, but rather provide an additional tool for schools to use to determine what improvements can be made that best fit the unique needs of their students and facility. Securing schools and prioritizing the safety of children should not be a difficult decision in Washington. Response to school violence is not a partisan issue. Yet, the same tragedy after tragedy occurs and no action is taken while conversations about long-term solutions take place.

166:19 – 168:1  
**Increased Security after Shooting at Congressional Baseball Game**  
When a crazed gunman shot up the congressional baseball practice last year, threatening the lives of several colleagues, response was instant. Republicans and Democrats came together and acted. There was an increase in security to protect members of Congress and their staff. Money flowed. Bullet proof glass was available. Barletta could even put in a security system to protect his home. There were no partisan attempts to hold up the money for those security measures as a bargaining chip. Funding for protection went out the door immediately while other discussions continued. People move fast when worried about their own safety or that of friends and family. Why are Congressional lives more important than the lives of children?

168:2 – 169:4  
**Support of Commission’s Recommendations**  
Teachers and students will go to school today, hoping it is not them. Securing schools is one part of the problem and many other actions are needed to find solutions to the violence. He promises to be a strong partner in putting the Commission’s recommendations into action, so children can grow up in an environment free of fear and violence, where they can make good memories that make them smile.

ANNIE ACOSTA (The Arc of the United States):  

169:5 – 169:18  
**Arc of the United States**  
Annie Acosta represents Arc of the United States. Arc is the largest community-based organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It has a network of over 650 chapters across the country, promoting and protecting human rights and full inclusion in the community. They serve people with a variety of diagnoses, including autism, Down Syndrome, and fetal alcohol syndrome.
169:19 – 170:9 **Concerns Re Disciplinary Policies**
Arc greatly appreciates the Commission’s commitment to making schools safer for students and school personnel, but is concerned about the potential to make a bad situation worse by expanding ineffective and overly harsh disciplinary policies. They need to have better, not necessarily tougher approaches. There is a high risk of unintended consequences for people with disabilities in some of the administration’s proposals. The Commission should not focus on a few bad actors, but instead should ensure that people with disabilities or mental illness are part of the broader conversation about school safety.

170:10 – 171:10 **Arc Recommendations Re School Safety for Students with Disabilities**
Arc requests that the Commission take a comprehensive view of school safety. The issue is broader than the mass shootings that dominate headlines. School safety is also about interpersonal violence, victimization, restraint, seclusion, and bullying, which are far more common both inside and outside of school. Recent preliminary data show there were 47 school-associated violent deaths per year, while there were nearly 750,000 instances of victimization among students 12-18 at school and over 600,000 instances outside of school. Second, the Commission should address populations that are most affected by school violence. A range of school violence experiences are more common among certain groups, including students with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are more likely than their peers to be restrained, secluded, bullied, and socially isolated. The Commission should ensure specific recommendations for those populations.

171:11 – 172:1 **Arc Recommendations Re Positive School Climate**
Arc urges the Commission to recognize that positive school climate is an essential element of school safety. The number and quality of social relationships has long been recognized as the leading determinant of physical and mental health. Schools with positive school climates help foster positive relationships by teaching emotional skills such as self-regulation, problem-solving, and empathy. They also emphasize adult modeling behavior, such as how to respectfully disagree or admit fault. Any recommendations to support schools and improve school climates must include specific provisions that include unique needs of students with disabilities.

172:2 – 172:20 **Root Causes of Students’ Problem Behaviors**
Arc also would ask the Commission to explore the root causes of students’ problem behaviors. Much has been learned in recent years about the lasting effects on children who have been exposed to abuse, neglect, violence, or death. As a result of those adverse childhood experiences, they may act out with defiance, aggressive behaviors, or self-harm. Students with disabilities who experience both higher rates of abuse and social isolation sometimes need additional support to appropriately express themselves. Challenging behaviors are often a manifestation of the disability itself. Students with autism who act out due to sensory overload need to have properly trained school staff who understand their behaviors and proper calming techniques. The
Commission should support recommendations to differentiate between those types of behaviors and those that pose genuine threats to safety.

172:21 – 173:8 Prioritization of Evidence-Based Approaches
Arc encourages the Commission to prioritize evidence-based approaches and reject approaches with no proven effectiveness, e.g., arming teachers. More guns do not make students and teachers safer. The Commission should look at evidence-based practice, such as positive behavior intervention and supports, restorative justice, family involvement, and trauma-informed practice.

173:9 – 174:1 Role of SROs
The Commission should also address the proper role of SROs, who help keep students safe. There has been a troubling trend of SROs’ becoming involved in disciplining students with disabilities. Arc urges the Commission to ensure that SROs, the vast majority of whom carry handcuffs, a gun, Mace, and a Taser, are not involved in disciplinary issues for students with disabilities. Behaviors are sometimes their only method of communication. Deciphering those behaviors and what leads to them, as well as how to de-escalate, takes training and expertise.

Arc urges the Commission to maintain the Department of Education’s school discipline guidance, which focuses on internal school climate and ongoing school discipline practices rather than acute threats posed by intruders. The guidance explains in easy-to-understand language the obligations schools have under current civil rights law to conduct school discipline in non-discriminatory ways. This in no way precludes school staff and others from addressing actual threats of harm.

ELIZA BYRD (Executive Director of GLSEN):

174:18 – 175:14 Root Causes of Student Alienation, Anxiety, and Fear
Eliza Bayard is executive director of GLSEN, a longtime organizational partner to the Departments of Education, Justice, and HHS, working together to improve school climates in all states. She wishes to address upstream approaches regarding root causes of student alienation, anxiety, and fear. Recent history provides concrete experience showing it is possible on a national scale to reduce violence among students and mitigate the impact of mental health issues, experiences of injustice, adult cruelty or indifference, which can in extreme cases lead to lethal violence.

175:15 – 176:11 Reduction in Bullying and Violence in K-12 Schools
With federal leadership on social climate and safety, including a deep and systemic focus on civil rights oversight and enforcement, the U.S. had as of 2016 begun to turn the tide on bullying and bias violence in K-12 schools. According to the department’s own report from the 2015 school crime supplement, produced by the Departments of Education and HHS, there was an 11% drop in rates of bullying nationwide between 2007 – 2015. The use of hate language also declined by 3% during that period. GLSEN has been deeply invested in that effort for over 28 years, focused
on the multiple specific challenges faced by LGBTQ students who exist in every community and are of every race, religion, national origin, ability, and immigration status.

Hostile School Climates Faced by GLSEN Students
GLSEN’s student constituents face more hostile school climates than their heterosexual peers and feel less safe as a result. LGBTQ students are also at a higher risk of experiencing disproportionate and discriminatory school discipline and being pushed out of their schools than their non-LGBTQ peers. In GLSEN’s decades of work on promoting safe and inclusive schools, they have learned what works to prevent harmful outcomes.

Strategies to Increase Safety and Respect
Effective strategies to increase safety and respect for all students includes increasing mental health resources in schools and ensuring that providers are prepared and willing to help all students who come through the doors of their offices. Providing professional development for education professionals on cultural competency and systems of positive behavioral interventions and support is another strategy, as is creating anti-bullying and harassment intervention policies that specifically require attention to bias-based victimization of students by their peers and schools. It is important to ensure that restorative justice practices are utilized in the classroom and that discriminatory differential discipline practices are identified and eliminated from the school system.

School Discipline Guidance
GLSEN hopes the Commission recognizes that the Department of Education must maintain the rethinking school discipline guidance, an invaluable guide to school districts and schools on effective and equitable approaches to necessary discipline.

Fear, Anxiety, and Uncertainty in Students’ Lives
The past 18 months provide a stark lesson in how federal action can directly instill fear, anxiety, and uncertainty in students’ daily lives. Last fall, UCLA released a study of the experiences of public school teachers nationwide and found a dramatic increase in student anxiety, stress, and incivility in 2017. Students reported a pervasive sense of fear, most acute for Black and Latino, Muslim, immigrant, disabled, and LGBTQ youth. Federal actions, including the withdrawal of guidance on trans students’ rights, fears of immigrant enforcement actions at schools, public statements calling into question the department’s civil rights commitment, and a pervasive tone of disrespect on the basis of personal bias have taken a concrete toll on students’ sense of safety and belonging, both at school and nationally. The government must do better by every child in the country if they truly believe they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights. The work is hard and requires time, funding, wide-ranging collaboration, and a fundamental willingness to acknowledge historical and systemic biases and discrimination.
ROBERT HULL (National Association of State Boards of Education):

179:12 – 180:12 Commission Visit to Elementary School
Robert Hull is the executive VP of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). Last week’s field visit by the Commission to the Maryland elementary school is a great example of the power of dialogue between policymakers, practitioners, and researchers by sharing new ideas, what works, lessons learned. By critically examining educational systems in place, the commission can address school safety in a manner that exemplifies informed, research-based policymaking. NASBE serves and strengthens state boards of education in their role as the citizens’ voice in education.

180:13 – 180:22 NASBE’s Activities
State board members include business and community leaders, teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents, parents, and students in 17 states. They are deeply committed to preventing school violence, so that all students can thrive and achieve. They are committed to collaborating with others to achieve that goal. In March, one in three school boards discussed ways to address school safety and student wellness.

181:1 – 181:19 NASBE Findings Since Parkland Shooting
Since the Parkland shooting in February 2018, state boards have learned that school safety is multifaceted and no single solution will suffice. Physical safety of school buildings must be improved. Board discussions in Massachusetts, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and other states revealed this is no easy task, but remain committed to ensuring schools are well-resourced and that educators receive timely, evidence-based training. They need to tackle the root causes of violent behavior, i.e., isolation, loneliness, an inability to cope with anger, anxiety, or depression. Physical safety measures include drills, emergency preparedness, and measures to ensure students’ wellbeing through family engagement, teacher training, and social-emotional supports.

181:20 – 182:13 Preventive Measures Recommended
There is a growing consensus among NASBE that they must do more to coordinate a whole host of preventative measures, including developing positive school climates, providing quality mental health services, and addressing the needs of the whole child, whole school, and whole community. Connecticut, Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, and Washington have committed to working together as a cohort of states to discuss successes, challenges, and innovations in leveraging social and emotional learning to best fit their local needs. Those states and more recognize that developing social-emotional learning in the K-12 setting has a positive impact on school safety, absenteeism rates, school discipline, school climate, and overall academic achievement.

182:14 – 183:9 Implementation of Practices in Diverse Contexts
NASBE encourages the Commission to consider how implementation of promising practices could vary in diverse contexts, from rural to urban schools. The capacity of a small school district in a sparsely populated
area where the superintendent drives the bus is vastly different from that of an urban or suburban school. The Commission is encouraged to hold listening sessions and make field visits in diverse localities. NASBE agrees with Devos’ statement that we simply cannot allow this trend to continue. Students cannot continue to face the trauma of losing classmates, teachers, and siblings to school violence.

Ongoing Effort following Final Report

The conversation about ending school violence must remain front and center. Work must not end with the Commission’s final report. The report should issue a call to action for state boards and education leaders to keep learning, gathering data, conducting research, and building evidence to better inform policymaking and practice. A working document must be developed whose usefulness and effectiveness is assessed as actions are implemented. Institutions of higher education should be encouraged to develop partnerships with states and local districts to ensure they are supported with current research and continue to refine their practice and analyze data to ensure their practices are achieving the desired outcomes. Recommendations should be examined for both potential intended and unintended consequences, and regarding whether the policy will make schools safer in the short-term and long-term. Also, they need to look at what resources are necessary to carry out the policy. All students’ and teachers’ lives are valuable. Equity must be the guiding principle of ongoing conversation. NASBE will connect the Commission to members who can discuss strategies they have developed.

BARTHOLOMEW DEVON (Autism Speaks):

Autism Speaks

Bartholomew Devon serves as manager of public policy at Autism Speaks, dedicated to promoting solutions across the spectrum and throughout the lifespan for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. They strive to increase understanding and acceptance, advance research into the causes of autism, and advocate for improved services for people with autism spectrum disorders and related conditions. Devon wishes to highlight three points critical to ensuring the safety of students with autism in the nation’s public schools.

Elopement of Autistic Children

Approximately one in three children with autism wander each year, leaving a safe area or responsible caregiver for more than a brief period. The consequences of wandering can be lethal. Autism Speaks encourages the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the DOJ to use its discretion to fund initiatives that better prepare school and law enforcement personnel to address the dangers of wandering. The Department of Education developed a resource document on wandering and shared it with Autism Speaks for informal stakeholder feedback. The document will help schools address wandering. Autism Speaks applauds the department’s efforts in preparing the document and encourages its prompt release.
Law Enforcement Training

Autism Speaks’ second recommendation relates to law enforcement training. According to the Office of Civil Rights, students with disabilities make up 12% of overall K-12 student enrollment, but 28% of referrals to law enforcement. As long as such interactions are taking place, it is critical for the safety of both students and officers that members of law enforcement have specialized training in working with students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Department of Education is encouraged to invest in initiatives designed to prevent unwarranted student involvement with law enforcement and to provide autism-specific training for law enforcement personnel. Autism Speaks has facilitated successful collaboration between police and families locally, and is eager to assist. In 2016, the DOJ’s community relations service produced a developmental disability awareness training curriculum for law enforcement agencies. They encourage the department to publish and share that curriculum as soon as possible.

Inclusive Emergency Preparedness

Autism Speaks’ third recommendation relates to inclusive emergency preparedness. It is critical that school safety plans include provisions for protecting students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have a right to be safe at school. They receive accommodations in their daily lives and also need them in crisis situations. Schools must develop safety and evacuation plans that recognize and account for the exceptionalities of students with disabilities. Devon urges the agencies represented on the Commission, especially the Department of Education, to invest in initiatives to support inclusive school safety plans, such as training for school personnel and first responders, onsite emergency practice for students with disabilities, and increasing family awareness that individualized planning and supports may be needed. At the very least, the departments should identify and disseminate best practices. Autism Speaks recommends that the commission address school safety through a spectrum of supports, including but not limited to the issues mentioned.

JAIME KOPPEL (Communities for Just Schools Fund):

Communities for Just Schools Fund

Jaime Koppel is the deputy director for strategic partnerships at the Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF), a national donor collaborative that resources community organizations working to ensure positive and supportive school climates that affirm and foster the success of all students. CJSF makes grants to organizers, young people, parents, caregivers, and educators who are working to end the overuse of exclusionary school discipline practices and replace them with positive supports. CJSF exists because there are far too many students who are not safe in schools, because they are policed and targeted for exclusion via flawed policies and practices and flawed perceptions of them in their communities. CJSF’s 50 grantee partners’ efforts span 31 states and have positively impacted millions of students, families, and educators. When CJSF received notice of the hearing last Friday evening, they reached out to their network to ensure that their partners, who mostly
work on less than a shoestring, could be resourced into the room. Koppel’s remarks will echo those of Amina, Marlyn, Zakiya, and Hashim.

190:21 – 191:10 Supportive School Discipline Initiative
Koppel is a former U.S. DOJ senior fellow. In 2014-15, she worked on the supportive school discipline initiative to disentangle education from systems that had become release valves for overtaxed, under-resourced schools. The federal government has a wealth of knowledge at its fingertips when it comes to what it takes to ensure all schools are resourced and supported, and are nurturing the academic and social-emotional genius of all students while also ensuring their safety.

191:11 – 192:6 Experience Re Social-Emotional Learning at Schools
Koppel is also the mother of two Montgomery County, Maryland public school students. She has firsthand experience at how difficult it is for schools to get social-emotional learning right, especially in the current environment, which so often privileges academic outcomes as a primary objective. She has seen parents, students, and teachers default to reliance on retributive justice to address conflict and harm, because it is what everyone knows and is comfortable with. She has seen the transformational power of restorative practices for restoring relationships and allowing high-quality learning. It is time to acknowledge the importance of ensuring that students are seen, heard, and loved. It sounds soft, but is the hardest work they need to do.

Koppel is concerned with the President’s request that the commission repeal the Obama Administration’s “Rethink School Discipline Policies” language. As a stated issue for a Commission purportedly focused on school safety, it is a narrowly framed and politically couched objective that has no place in this Commission’s work. If the objective is to ensure that the 2014 federal school discipline guidance package in no way contributes to the creation of unsafe schools, that should be the stated purpose. That guidance package included no policies. It provided guidance on relevant laws and offered states and local school districts a menu of resources they could consult in making their own decisions about policy and practice changes that would end disparities in discipline and ensure a safe and supportive school experience for all students.

193:8 – 193:19 Harmful Racist Practices
In order to get to the culture of connectedness desired, Koppel recommends considering how systems and adults are perpetuating deeply-embedded racist practices that harm students of color and their peers, including LGPTQ and gender non-conforming students, failing to ensure both their physical and emotional safety. School officials need to create schools as spaces for students, families, and staff to build meaningful relationships that are safe, supportive, and nurturing of academic and social-emotional learning.
Arming Teachers and Adding SROs
Arming teachers and/or SROs or increasing the number of SROs is a costly approach in every way. The expense will be borne by those already most at risk. Koppel recommends that the Commission model the need to listen and respond to what communities want and need in their schools. The groups supported by CJSF have a vision for what safe, supportive, and nurturing schools feel and look like.

Relationship-Centered Schools
Another of CJSF’s partners, Californians for Justice, is a statewide youth organizing group that has developed and disseminated a plan for implementing relationship-centered schools. Their research revealed that one out of three students in California cannot identify a single caring adult at school. They found that relationships between students and staff were key to student success. CJSF calls on policymakers, education leaders, and school staff to join them in creating relationship-centered schools. That means they do not need to invest further resources in hardening schools. They need to create learning environments where students can learn.

JIM ACCOMANDO (National PTA):

Mission of National PTA
Jim Accomando represents the nearly four million PTA members across 50 states, D.C., Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Europe. He urges the Commission to schedule future listening schedules at times and locations that are conducive to hearing from more parents, students, and teachers. The mission of the National PTA is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging in empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Grief and thoughts and prayers about gun violence are not enough. Immediate action from the nation’s leadership is needed.

School Safety Recommendations
This year, the country has experienced 14 school shootings resulting in injuries or death. Parents should never fear sending their children to school and students should always feel safe in learning environments. School safety is a critical priority for all parents, educators, students, and community members. Every attempt must be made to reduce violence, especially incidents involving firearms, to ensure every child can learn in a safe environment. National PTA urges meaningful parent and family engagement in the development and implementation of school safety policies and programs, e.g., emergency crisis response plans, discipline policies, and access to school-based and community support services.

Gun-Free Schools; Police Presence
National PTA believes that the most effective day-to-day school climate is one that is gun-free. They defer to local collaborative decision-making that engages parents and families to allow for the presence of law enforcement deployed in community-oriented policing. The association has a strong history of advocating for laws and regulations in the areas of
school safety to include mental health, gun safety, and violence prevention.

197:14 – 198:8  
**Recommendations Re Firearm Safety**
Many of the recommendations and position statements of the National PTA go back to the early 1990s, with continuous updates and amendments. They include requiring universal background checks in the license to purchase a firearm, reenacting the federal ban on the sale and possession of military-style assault weapons, and lifting any ban on research that studies the causes and effects of gun violence. The group also advocates for preventive measures to educate students, educators, and community members on firearm safety and violence prevention, such as inclusion of violence prevention and intervention strategies in public schools, community programs, and services. They also promote public education campaigns to alert parents and community members to the devastating effects of firearms and firearm-related violence.

198:9 – 198:19  
**Prioritization of Mental Health Services**
The National PTA urges federal, state, and local policymakers to prioritize mental health education, early intervention, prevention, and access to school- and community-based mental health personnel and services, so that all children can reach their fullest potential. National PTA has long been committed to providing improved mental health programs and services to children, youth, and their families and to believe that all children and youth have the right to mental health treatment.

198:20 – 199:5  
**Outreach and Education**
The National PTA recommends that federal, state, and local policies prioritize outreach and education, including professional development for all school-based employees in schools and communities regarding childhood mental health resources that are specifically provided to build mental health and behavioral health system capacity within schools and communities, to ensure that students can receive a proactive continuum of behavior in mental health services.

199:6 – 200:2  
**Increased Mental Health Staff; Framework for Schools**
States and school districts must provide necessary resources to ensure adequate ratios of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses, who are the most qualified professionals to provide school-based mental health services. The time for additional studies or deliberation has passed. A framework for safe and successful schools, written and endorsed by the nation’s leading education stakeholders and practitioners, includes the best practices and policy recommendations for school safety that the Commission can promote. Immediate action is required to make schools safer.

JEFF SIMERING (Council of Great City Schools):

200:3 – 200:21  
**Council of the Great City Schools**
Jeff Simering is director of legislative services for the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the nation’s 70 largest central city-based
school districts. The board of directors is comprised of the superintendent and a board member from each city. The Council is alarmed by the prevalence of gun violence in too many urban neighborhoods. They share the frustration voiced by parents and students from affected schools, who point to the typical government response, i.e., mainly talk and little action, particularly at the federal level.

200:22 – 201:17 Recommendations Re Increased School Safety
The Council urges the Commission to accelerate its findings and reporting, in order to not delay concrete federal action into the next federal fiscal year or beyond. School safety is a multidimensional issue and requires a multifaceted set of actions. The Council calls for comprehensive action from the federal government to protect school children. Their resolution calls for new funds to assist districts to update emergency and crisis response plans, coordinate with local government agencies, make building alterations, and require security-related systems and equipment, implement violence prevention, train in trauma, and provide programs and supports along with new funds to increase the number of school counselors, mental health staff, and safety personnel.

201:18 – 202:6 Recommendations Re Gun Control and Arming Teachers
The Council board of directors also recommends that the federal government strengthen criminal background checks and reporting systems, to ban sales to the general public of assault weapons, large capacity ammunition cartridges, and gun modification devices. They should also expand and update the gun-free schools zone laws, expand research and data collection on the extent of gun violence, its causes and effective prevention and intervention strategies. The Council does not support arming teachers.

202:7 – 203:8 Additional Recommended Actions
The Council recommends that the Department of Education withdraw its request to zero out the funding of Title IV(a), which can be used for school safety initiatives and mental health services. Additionally, the department should clarify that full flexibility available under the Every Student Succeeds Act, including transferability provisions and ed flex provisions, will not be constrained by expansive department interpretations and could be encouraged amongst additional state departments of education and school districts. School-based decisions that might otherwise concentrate funding on either school safety, support services, or professional development or for academic services and strategies to close achievement gaps can often be discouraged by the fear of an after-the-fact federal interpretation, disapproval, or audit exception. A clear statement of department policy on those issues could really help school districts meet their particular needs.

203:9 – 203:21 Significant Federal Action Required
The Council underscores the sense of urgency for significant federal action in school safety. It requests that the Commission study all available federal actions and options that would improve the safety of the nation's
children. To limit the scope of inquiry would undermine the final work product. The Council is ready to assist the Commission as needed.

NOELIA RIVERA-CALDERON (School Discipline Advocacy Service):

203:22 – 204:14  **School Discipline Advocacy Service**
Noelia Rivera-Calderon is the program director of the School Discipline Advocacy Service, an organization that directly advocates for students in school disciplinary proceedings in Philadelphia. Prior to that, she was a middle school teacher in a Philadelphia middle school. She is appearing to urge the Commission to recognize that existing guidance from the Departments of Education and Justice are essential tools in efforts to ensure that children learn in a safe and supportive environment.

204:15 - 205:18  **Law Enforcement in Schools**
School safety is not a new concern. Officials have chosen to address it by increasing law enforcement presence in schools. Too often, rather than protecting students from gunmen or intruders, law enforcement officers turn their efforts against the students they are meant to protect. A generation ago, adults got detentions and suspensions as the most common and most severe punishments for school-based misbehavior. Today, almost half of U.S. children attend schools with law enforcement officers who may and do arrest children for the same offenses that in the past would have merited those detentions. Almost two million children attend a school with a law enforcement officer, but no guidance counselor. Over 10,000 children a year are arrested for some form of disturbing school. The use of suspensions has dramatically increased. A disproportionate number of students arrested and suspended are children of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities. That is not what people wanted when they dreamed of safe schools.

205:19 – 206:15  **Rethinking Discipline Guidance**
The components of the current rethinking discipline guidance are essential tools for schools seeking to promote safe and supportive learning environments. They provide guidance on ending racial discrimination in discipline, on ending the traumatizing and sometimes deadly use of seclusion and restraints in schools, and on ending the use of corporal punishment in schools. The guidance recognizes that, beyond the fact that suspensions and school-based arrests are often discriminatory, they just do not work. It recognizes that SROs should not be tasked with enforcing school discipline. That task should be left to school administrators and teachers. The guidance recommends supports for students with disabilities. The Commission should not think twice about maintaining and supporting that guidance, which provides commonsense tools to help schools and students stay safe.

206:16 – 207:18  **School Discipline Advocacy**
As an advocate in the School Discipline Advocacy Service, Rivera-Calderon defended a young black high school girl arrested for simply wanting to speak to her mother, whom the principal had called on her cell phone. At 14, she was put in handcuffs and taken to the police station,
where she sat for hours. She now has a criminal record. That experience cannot be taken back. It is a tragedy that is being repeated in classrooms across America. A lot of work must be done to promote effective, fair school discipline and the current guidance is one essential step. As a former middle school teacher, she knows how difficult maintaining school discipline and safety can be. No one believes school discipline should be nonexistent, but it must be effective and fair. She asks that the Commission continue to support safe, effective school discipline by maintaining current guidance that keeps discipline in the hands of administrators and teachers rather than law enforcement.

DR. ZAIS (Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Education):

207:19 – 208:12 Closing Remarks
Dr. Zais reads a list of names of people who were signed up to speak, but are not present. He thanks everyone for participating.

The meeting is adjourned.