



# Indiana School Boards Association

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Dear Deputy Secretary Zais:

Thank you for your participation in the listening session on school safety issues during the NSBA's Summer Leadership Seminar (SLS). The work of the Federal Commission on School Safety is paramount to providing school personnel across the U.S. with best practices and adequate resources to ensure safe and secure classrooms for our students while balancing these needs with local control to drive decision making.

Indiana has been recognized as a national leader with our longstanding policies in the following areas:

- ✓ The creation of the first **School Safety Specialist Academy** in the nation in 1999
  - Indiana now has more than 2,000 certified school safety specialists with 82 percent of school districts with two or more trained specialists on staff
  - The certified specialists are trained to provide a leadership role in conducting a *needs assessment for physical security and policies and procedures for emergency preparedness*
- ✓ Every school district must submit **school safety/emergency preparedness plans** annually to the state at least 60-days before the start of the school year
  - These plans must include provisions on protecting students and staff in cases of manmade occurrences, such as student disturbances, weapons and active shooter situations, hostage and kidnapping incidents
- ✓ Indiana requires **county-level school safety commissions** comprised of school district personnel, local law enforcement and public safety agency representatives, and members of the juvenile justice system. Participation in these county commissions is a criterion for eligibility for state grants focused on school safety
- ✓ Indiana Code permits the "hardening" of school buildings with **armed school personnel** as determined by local school boards
  - We do have some school districts that have implemented this policy and have or are in the midst of training school personnel
- ✓ The Indiana Department of Homeland Security and the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute have administered **long-term school safety grant programs** that provide funding for school resource officers, threat assessments, and facility enhancements, including technology and other safety equipment

In 2018 Governor Eric Holcomb and the Indiana General Assembly have taken additional action through passage of legislation or increased funding to expand on existing state-level programs and policies to support school districts. These new strategies include:

- ✓ Increased by \$5 million/year to a total of \$15 million annually in funding for the Secured Schools Grant program to support school districts in hiring SROs, conducting threat assessments, and enhancing facilities with technology and equipment

- ✓ Made available up to \$35 million in low-interest Common School Fund loans available before June 30, 2019, to school districts at up to \$500,000/district
- ✓ Passed anti-bullying and human trafficking identification and reporting legislation
- ✓ Required and funded school safety audits to be conducted through the Indiana Department of Education in every school building by March 31, 2019
- ✓ Created a taskforce to evaluate school safety programs and initiatives and make recommendations to the Governor by August 1, 2018
- ✓ Provided 1 metal detector for every 250 students to any school corporation wanting these state-paid devices for deployment and use during the 2018-19 school year. As a result, the state provided more than 3,200 devices to 94 percent of school districts

Today, while all of the efforts are significant and commendable, more work remains to address challenges confronting students and their emotional, behavioral, and mental health. In particular, **we would ask the Federal Commission on School Safety to provide financial resources and best-practice training support to address the following:**

- ✓ Identify and provide schools with a universal and effective mental health screening tool and provide financial resources to support training educators on mental health risk-factor recognition
- ✓ Provide grant funding to address increased personnel needs, including social workers, school psychologists, and mental health counselors
- ✓ Increase funding support for partner community-based mental health centers and provide financial resources to school districts to contract for services with these organizations
- ✓ Refrain from federal mandates for use of particular technologies, equipment, or facility requirements and leave these decisions to the local governing body and district leaders
- ✓ Refrain from specific mandates on arming school personnel and leave this decision to local control

Thank you once again for your leadership on student safety and wellness issues. We appreciate your consideration of the concerns and recommendations to come before you at the SLS on Friday, August 17.

Sincerely,



Terry Spradlin  
ISBA Executive Director