

## **School Safety Proposal**

### **Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder**

School safety is a complex and emotional issue that requires the leaders of this great nation to balance long-standing customs with emerging threats that impact all Americans. The topic deserves thoughtful and comprehensive action in Michigan and nationwide to properly address each aspect and create an educational environment that fosters the emotional well-being of our children and helps prevent violent behavior. In searching for answers, it is clear: there isn't one simple solution to solve this problem. A multifaceted approach is the best way we can ensure stable learning environments for Michigan's students while simultaneously protecting them.

Effective school safety depends upon the collaboration and cooperation of stakeholders including communities, schools, governments and families. We must continue to collectively seek necessary and meaningful answers to the real problems children face in today's world, including what we can do as a society to identify warning signs and provide the appropriate behavioral support to students who need it. Early intervention is vital.

Michigan has implemented successful programs to assist in identifying potential problems and providing support for our schools. In 2014, the Michigan State Police worked with the Michigan Department of Education to create an All Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guidance for Schools to assist schools in creating safety and response plans and policies. Since then, numerous other states, including the state of Florida, have used Michigan's work as a template to their own state's safety programs. However, the time has come to do more to enhance and expand upon those initiatives and ensure they are effective.

I have been working with my partners in the state Legislature as well as the departments of State Police, Education, and Health and Human Services to review best practices for how to better protect our schoolchildren and propose innovative solutions to help make our schools safer. We need to create nurturing environments so students of all ages can focus on what matters: their personal and educational development.

### **PREPARATION**

#### **School Safety Planning and Response**

One major problem we have today is that many schools, both public and private, don't have comprehensive school safety plans. And of those that do, we as a state aren't sure what those plans look like, if they meet basic safety standards, or are made aware of any incidents that occur.

To help us solve this problem, **we need to update and strengthen school safety plans to be more comprehensive with new tools and best practices for assessing, preparing for, responding to, and reporting violence and emergency threats, as well as update Michigan's All Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guidance for Schools.** These updates need to include things like updated behavioral and mental health assessments and intervention, the use of OK2SAY, the importance of school culture, drill responses, coordinated local law enforcement and emergency response, and training for students and school personnel on what to expect from school administrators, state and local law enforcement, and emergency responders during and after a violent incident. We need to have a

more comprehensive approach to holistic assessment and intervention in addition to increasing emergency response capabilities.

In addition, schools have no way to truly learn from each other because there isn't any auditing or reporting requirements of safety plans or on safety incidents. I want **to let schools invite inspectors and safety auditors in to evaluate emergency procedures, prevention, and preparedness as well as require schools to submit incident reports of violence to law enforcement.** That way, we can identify improvements in safety procedures and better share best practices to learn from each other. These audits and reports will be protected so that no one can use them to identify vulnerabilities in school safety practices.

### **School Safety Improvements**

Today, many workplaces have card access readers in place, where you must swipe a badge to enter a building or elevator, or security guards sign you in, with identification, as a guest. And yet just about anyone can walk right into many Michigan schools, front or back door, unchecked.

Improving access control to school buildings, by limiting the entry of guests to the front door, as well as having reinforced doors and buzzer systems, is a critical starting point for improving school safety. Sometimes, the most basic initiatives are the most effective, and should be completed before moving on to more complex solutions. In addition, schools need additional infrastructure improvements to combat today's issues including having communications systems that connect directly to local police, and monitoring equipment to immediately spot potential suspects.

Schools have many tools, including the use of sinking funds, to improve their security. In addition to those local tools, since 2015, the state Legislature has provided \$6 million in grants to schools for safety infrastructure, or "hardening" projects. While over 100 schools have made improvements through this funding, there are hundreds more that still need basic security measures in place.

**A new \$20 million School Safety Grant program will be run by the Michigan State Police to help schools that need to strengthen their buildings, improve their lock systems, and upgrade their communications to be prepared for any emergency.** This \$20 million can help augment local tools and support up to 400 schools with the basic access restrictions, door upgrades and radio communication needs at about \$50,000 per school. **I am requesting that \$2 million be made available immediately to secure those schools first that require basic security upgrades, such as functioning, locking doors.** The remaining funds will be made available in Fiscal Year 19 for additional security upgrades.

### **INTERVENTION**

One of the greatest areas of need is the ability for schools to assess key behaviors of students with the potential to pose a threat to themselves and others. According to recent studies of the FBI and Secret Service on examinations of school shooters from across the country, most perpetrators showed signs and problematic behavior that suggested they needed help. To that end, both the FBI and Secret Service recommend that every school adopt a behavioral assessment team to help identify such students and intervene early. The state of Virginia has emerged as a national leader in assessing student behavior, with model policies, assessment checklists, and procedures that will be helpful to consider as the state of Michigan updates the new School Safety Plan.

To be clear, we are not talking about student profiling. The FBI states “there is no accurate or useful profile of students who engaged in targeted school violence.” We are talking about having trained staff being able to identify emotional and behavioral needs of students first and foremost and connecting the student to the best and most appropriate resources for optimal care. Quick and early intervention is key. This is why we need all schools to have a School Safety Plan that outlines not just emergency response drills and checklists but acknowledges and incorporates behavioral health assessments into school administrative procedures.

Once behaviors of concern are identified, it is critical that these students receive fast, meaningful, and appropriate types of assessments, intervention, and assistance. It is just as important to **ensure school teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and families have the requisite training to identify when students are in need** and to be able to connect them with the help they need. Research has suggested it is counterproductive to “label,” expel, or otherwise emotionally isolate these students. Thankfully, Michigan has existing mental and behavioral health resources that schools, students, and parents can access. I want to **pilot a \$2 million grant program this year in which Intermediate School Districts can apply for a competitive grant for behavioral assessment training for teams** of school administrators, School Resource Officers, Pathways to Potential workers, and other local mental health agencies within the ISD, based on successful models, such as that found in the state of Virginia.

### **OK2Say**

In addition to securing the physical buildings of schools, we need to ensure the students have access to resources when they feel something is amiss. As we have learned, in nearly every case of school violence, other people knew about the attacker’s idea beforehand. OK2SAY is a confidential tip program that gives students an avenue to report suspicious behavior of potential harm or criminal activities directed at students, school employees, or schools. This statewide tip program protects the confidentiality of a reporter’s identity, operates 24 hours a day, 365 days per year and can accept tips from text messages, phone calls, emails, and website submittals. In real time, it connects the tip provider to the State Police, which first assesses the situation, then refers the information anonymously to the appropriate school officials, law enforcement, or other appropriate agencies for immediate follow-up. It has been operational in Michigan since 2014, and while we have made great progress, there still are gaps we need to fill. For example, once the tip has been received, is assessed, and referred to the appropriate local agency, the state does not consistently know the outcome of the tip. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if the appropriate care was provided or adequate resources made available to address the situation.

In addition, the number of tips has increased by 50% in recent years, requiring the need for additional state analysts to receive and process tips.

Last year, 20,000 students a month were educated on the OK2Say tip program through school events, posters, and other advertising venues, such as advertisements on movie screens. While it sounds impressive, this current rate would require six years to educate all students currently enrolled in Michigan schools, not accounting for graduation rates. This is not good enough! We need to reach more students through the most effective means available, as directed by students themselves.

That’s why I want to **triple the funding for exposure of the OK2Say program and require student-led awareness programs, as well as provide resources to address the increasing volume of tips from students.** More schools and students need to learn about and use OK2SAY, including ensuring materials

and training are offered to every public and private school in the state. Additionally, we need to review and enhance the marketing materials and review comprehensive marketing strategies within schools to ensure widespread exposure to the tip line, including success stories. The review should include student feedback and assistance on finding the best message and medium to reach their peers.

We also need to ensure that schools that have their own tip lines are reporting those to the state. Some are not staffed full time and the state does not know what referrals are being made when those tips are received. Are the appropriate resources available to direct students with suspected behavior to get the help they need? We are not able to answer that question because there aren't any reporting standards for local school tip lines. We will change that. **All schools will be required to provide the state with basic information on their tip line to ensure the appropriate resources are available** to meet the needs of student and provide for an optimal safe environment.

## RESPONSE

### Law Enforcement Training

School Resource Officers are an important part of a school safety plan for many schools. These officers range from active-duty police officers stationed within a school to retired law enforcement officials. All these options are important and viable additions to school staffing. However, today in Michigan, we do not have an accurate report of how many schools have School Resource Officers working in them, a description of the responsibilities of these officers, nor an idea of the specific type of training they have received to serve in our schools.

Twenty-nine states have standardized training programs for school resource officers. Michigan is not one of them. There aren't any existing state standards for School Resource Officers like there are for police officers in Michigan. The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) is the entity responsible for creating Michigan's law enforcement standards. I will be **directing MCOLES, to create a tiered training for School Resource Officers** so that schools, staff, and parents have a better understanding of what is expected of a School Resource Officer.

In addition, MCOLES has a mandated Active Duty Firearm Standard for all Michigan law enforcement agencies. What this means for Michigan law enforcement administrators is that officers must meet the standard at least once annually. This standard was created to address gaps between what is often stressed in firearms training, for example static marksmanship, versus the actual challenges that officers face in dynamic, often close-quarter, life-threatening assaults. Today, that standard does not include responses to active violence scenarios that are seen in schools. I will be **directing MCOLES to develop a second, advanced standard for active violence response training into the curriculum for certified police officers** in Michigan. This will provide first responders with unique skills currently not learned in traditional training related to mass casualty incident response involving active violence and threats.

We also can improve in areas of coordinating local response efforts with those of the state. A good example of coordinated local response is how Central Michigan University officials worked closely with local law enforcement, state police, emergency responders, students and parents to safely and effectively manage a recent active shooter emergency. Once the scene was secured, students were bussed to a nearby off-campus location to join with their parents. Local law enforcement maintained local control while the state police offered supplemental resources to assist. Lessons learned from this

example can be shared with all schools and response agencies so that we can **incorporate best practices to improve local and state cooperation during incident response.**

## **RECOVERY**

To assist our emergency and crisis responders, we need to conduct after-event reviews so that we can learn what works in these situations and apply them throughout the state, like that we learned from the CMU event. It is important that an after-event review be conducted, as directed in the All Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guidance for Schools, for local school and district personnel, students, parents, state law enforcement, local health agencies, and other impacted stakeholders in a comprehensive, lessons-learned experience. This is a vital component that can be easily overlooked but is important from both a healing and learning perspective for the community, as well as the entire state.

In addition, it is critical that our local and state health agencies are prepared to provide emergency counseling services to all those affected in an active violence situation. And our teachers, parents, and administrators need to be trained in identifying when students, and others, might need help in accessing resources after an event has occurred.

**We will ensure the recovery component of school safety and emergency operations plans are robust in both the planning guidance as well as part of any audit review process.**

## **ADDITIONAL ACTIONS**

### **Safe Schools Task Force**

To effectively engage experts throughout the state on creating and implementing the specific programs outlined above, I am **establishing a temporary School Safety Task Force made to develop specific recommendations before the end of this year to launch these initiatives and provide additional best-practice recommendations.** The Task Force will roll out their recommendations as they are developed by area throughout the year.

The experts on the Task Force will include local law enforcement, educators, public health professionals, and emergency response experts, as well as the departments of State Police, Education, and Health and Human Services. In addition, I am calling for the **creation of a Safe Schools Commission to review and help update the state's School Safety Plan annually,** identify and share additional mental and behavioral health resources, and increase collaboration among entities at various levels of government.

### **Collaboration with other States**

Michigan is working with governors throughout the country to tackle these shared challenges and find ways to enhance the safety of our communities and schools. Working collaboratively at all levels, including with our neighboring states, will help increase engagement and coordination to facilitate the apprehension of persons who commit or intend to commit criminal acts of violence.

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