

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL AND CAMPUS SECURITY

Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the 2023 Interim

October 19, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fourth meeting of the Task Force on School and Campus Security was held on October 19, 2023, at 11:00 AM in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Scott Lewis, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Scott Lewis Co-Chair; Senators Matthew Deneen, Michael J. Nemes, Reginald Thomas, and Stephen West; Representatives Savannah Maddox, Scott Sharp, and James Tipton.

Guests: Adam Diersing, Senior Policy Analyst, The Center for Innovation, Council of State Governments; and Ben Wilcox, State School Security Marshal, Department of Criminal Justice Training.

LRC Staff: Yvette Perry, Peter Wright, and Maurya Allen.

Approval of Minutes - September 19, 2023

Senator Deneen made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 19, 2023, meeting. Representative Sharp seconded the motion and it passed by voice vote.

Representative Sharp welcomed Julianna Ewashko, Legislative Assistant, to the committee as a shadowing staff member.

Interstate Compact for School Psychologists

Adam Diersing, Senior Policy Analyst, The Center for Innovation, Council of State Governments (CSG), was present to discuss proposed model legislation for an interstate compact for school psychologists. The proposed interstate compact for school psychology was developed in collaboration between the CSG and the Department of Defense to allow school psychologists to move and work between states. He gave a brief overview of interstate compacts and how they function, specifically how they work with occupational licensing interstate compacts. They are not an attempt to create a national licensure, they are simply agreements to maintain and improve public health and safety

Committee meeting materials may be accessed online at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/CommitteeDocuments/381>

and preserve state authority over professional licensing. Kentucky was one of the first states to sign on to the teacher licensing interstate compact last year. The model for a school psychologist interstate compact will closely mirror that of the teacher licensing interstate compact. Interstate compacts dramatically impact military spouses, who are a highly mobile population which has a high number of individuals in licensed professions, which prompted the Department of Defense to partner with CSG to craft these compacts.

A draft of the school psychology interstate compact model legislation was presented for public comment earlier this year and should be returned with comments by the end of this year. State requirements on a license include passing a qualifying national exam, a qualifying school psychologist exam, and completion of a minimum of 1,200 hours of supervised internship. He stated that those requirements are in line with Kentucky's licensure structure. Additionally, there is a requirement for background checks and there will not be any situation for a school psychologist to move between states and avoid a background check. For renewal, an individual must hold and maintain an active home state license, complete renewal requirements in the home state, and additional licenses automatically renew with the home state if administrative requirements are met.

Discipline and adverse action are a high priority for this population, so all discipline and revocation authority remain with the state, although there are increased requirements and authorization to share the discipline with other states. This will include data sharing with the national clearinghouse, but ownership of the data remains with the state. In the event of conflict between states, the model legislation does include a conflict resolution section. Additionally, while the adoption standard for the teacher compact was 10 states, the standard for the school psychologist compact is set at only seven states to address current shortages.

In response to a question from Representative Tipton, Mr. Diersing said the compact would require states to participate in a baseline level of licensing for school psychology, and the baseline in the model legislation is set at the current licensing requirements in Kentucky. Currently, over 300 individuals have joined the public comment period representing over 25 states. Not all of those states would sign on immediately, but it shows there is interest in addressing this nationwide shortage.

State Marshal Annual Report Update

Prior to the presentation, Jon Akers, Executive Director, Center for School Safety, came forward to briefly introduce School Safety Week. Materials regarding school safety week have been distributed to all the schools and made available online. He distributed

information regarding the school safety tip line to members and discussed how it will be promoted during school safety week.

Ben Wilcox, State School Security Marshal, Department of Criminal Justice Training, was presented the State Marshal Annual Report. The 2022-2023 annual report was released in September and the numbers show that Kentucky is doing well. In terms of access control, schools are 99.75 percent in compliance, which is very similar to last year. Many other mandates have similarly high compliance, in keeping with last year's report. The numbers are still lacking for school resource officers (SROs) and mental health professionals; however, they are improving. The ratio of mental health providers in 2020-2021 was one provider for every 328 students, for 2022-2023 there was one provider for every 306 students. Several school districts are in compliance with the statutory requirement of one provider for every 250 students, but more work remains to be done to achieve full compliance across the state.

The Kentucky Center for School Safety will release a report on November 1, including the most accurate numbers for SROs. However, there were 412 SROs in Kentucky when the School Safety and Resiliency Act was passed, and in 2023 that number has risen to 685. The report identifies that funding and lack of qualified applicants were most often stated as the reasons why schools do not have an SRO in order to comply with statute. At the moment, 466 campuses do not have a fulltime SRO.

Mr. Wilcox spoke briefly to his travels across the nation to discuss school safety and that he had recently returned from a visit to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. He said it was a powerful and sobering experience. It was gratifying to learn that many of the recommendations and lessons learned from that event as well as the Marshall County tragedy were incorporated in Kentucky's school safety legislation. As such, other states are looking to Kentucky and ways to mirror our system for school safety in their states, including creation of their own state school safety marshal offices.

In response to a question from Representative Tipton, Mr. Wilcox said they are very busy at DOCJT but his department is not directly associated with basic training. He does know that there does appear to be an increase in individuals moving to the SRO program from other police forces. Roughly 20 percent of schools have also started their own police forces, which is an increase as they were recently permitted by legislation.

Responding to a question from Senator Deneen, Mr. Wilcox said all schools now have electronically locking doors, cameras, and intercoms. Those are the minimum items

needed for compliance, but some schools are going further with the inclusion of vestibules and other entry security measures.

Responding to a question from Senator West, Mr. Wilcox said metal detectors are not mandated by law. If they are implemented, they also have a host of other things to consider including rings of security and having properly trained personnel to monitor them. Some schools and families feel safer with them, but they are not a one-size-fits-all solution to school safety.

In response to a question from Representative Tipton, Mr. Wilcox said that AI and other technologies are moving forward rapidly but he urged caution to schools. Districts need to ensure any technology they implement is working and being utilized properly. School districts that utilize specific technology are encouraged to speak with other districts about what works and share best practices. Sometimes the low-tech approaches, such as locked doors and window coverings, are most critically impactful.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.