



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Senator Murphy & School Officials: Help Us Protect Our Children

TERRENCE MURPHY June 4, 2018

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL SAFETY, SCHOOL SAFETY AGENTS, HELP US PROTECT OUR CHILDREN, YORKTOWN**



Yorktown, NY - Another day, another incident of violence in one of our schools. Most recently, on May 5th, the quick-action of a heroic School Resource Officer (SRO) thwarted a school shooting suspect at Dixon High School in Illinois. The suspected gunman opened fire inside the school building, firing several rounds at the responding officer. The SRO returned fire, hitting the gunman, who was taken into custody with non-life threatening injuries. The local police chief hailed the officer for saving countless lives.

With three school-aged children of his own, Senator Terrence Murphy shares a deep concern with parents who want their sons and daughters to learn in a safe and secure environment. On June 1st, Senator Terrence Murphy joined with a coalition of elected officials, school administrators, and members of local law enforcement at Lakeland-Copper Beech Middle School in Yorktown Heights to call for an increase of SROs in schools and additional aid for school districts that expend resources to improve security and safety technology.

Senator Murphy emphasized several pieces of legislation he has sponsored that are designed to curb violence in schools and provide more protection and security for students and staff, including S7813, which makes school shootings an act of domestic terrorism and establishes statutory parameters for the state intelligence fusion center. Another bill cited by Senator Murphy, S7790, provides state education aid for school districts that expend resources to improve security and safety technology.

Senator Murphy also highlighted S7805, a measure that would enact the deployment of mental health services to identify, report, and address individuals who could pose a threat to public safety and security. It further provides, for the first time, an important state aid component, that will provide schools with the necessary funds to retain the services of a mental health professional. A fourth bill, S7811, would establish a school resource officer education program to reimburse school districts outside of New York City \$50,000 for the hiring of a school resource officer.

"These are incredibly important issues for our country as well as New York State. We have seen school shootings way too often. The health and well-being of children and teachers should always take precedence over politics," said Senator Murphy. "I have a son in elementary school, one in junior high, and a daughter in high school. I want them to be safe, to be in a position to learn, rather than having to fear for their lives. Having more SROs in

our schools will act as a deterrent for anyone thinking about harming anyone in a school, whether it is our children or a staff member. We have a 168 billion dollar budget and we cannot find enough money to protect our schools? Shameful."

Assemblyman Kevin Byrne said, "I have partnered with a number of my colleagues in the Assembly for a number of similar proposals. Unfortunately, some of the measures have been caught up in politics. This falls on the leadership of the Assembly to embrace these issues and I strongly encourage them to do so. We only have a few weeks left in session. We need to get these measures passed this year."

Dr. George Stone, Superintendent of Schools, Lakeland Central School District said, "There is no more important priority for us than the safety and security of our children and those who take care of them every day. There is no greater reassurance as a Superintendent than to drive up to a school and to see a police patrol car parked in the front and to know there is a trained, armed, uniformed police officer monitoring the school. In addition, we have added more mental health services. We have mental health clinics, special programs for school phobic students, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse counselors and guidance counselors, all working around the clock to provide assistance to students and families."

"I applaud Senator Murphy's tenacity and his commitment to school safety. Sadly with all the tragedies that School Superintendents have had to face recently, we have become safety experts," stated Joseph Hochreiter, Superintendent of Schools, Hendrick Hudson School District. "A few weeks ago we set our budget, of which \$7 million is aimed toward safety and security measures. When I explained it to parents sadly, I had to use words like police officers, bulletproof glass, and metal detectors. We need the Assembly to act to pass this critically needed legislation so we can get back to the business of educating children."

Dr. Frances Wills, Superintendent of Schools, Putnam Valley Central School District commented, "In the past when we thought about school, we used to think about education first, now safety is my primary concern. We are fortunate to have a partnership with the Putnam Sheriff's Department. We have an armed SRO at our high school and middle school campus and a patrol officer at our elementary school. We rely on these officers, who are trained in areas that we have not been trained in. They are there to help us, to support us. These SROs have become allies to the students."

"We have taken proactive measures to keep our buildings secure. However, we cannot do it alone and we will always voice our support for laws that promote and support school safety," said Denise Kness, President, Lakeland Central School District Board of Trustees. "We are proud to stand side-by-side with our partners in state government in support of these measures, and wholeheartedly urge the Assembly to act on them. Thank you, Senator Murphy, for taking the lead on this. I feel we stand here today as parents, not politicians."

Ms. Kness also urged people to get involved in a TAKE ACTION letter campaign through the lakelandschools.org website. "You are two clicks away from getting your voice heard."

Yorktown Police Chief Robert Noble stated, "I am fortunate to have officers who can build a relationship with students, teachers, and administrators. When I talk to students, I tell them, 'This is your school, let us know what is going on and we will try to make a difference' -and we have. Our motto is 'help us, help you.' If these bills are passed, we will be able to do just that. We can help the community by having an SRO in each school."

Former Police lieutenant John LaPlaca, now the principal owner of Altaris Consulting Group LLC, works with 200 schools in New York and Long Island. "There is not a school administrator who does not lose sleep over safeguarding their schools. There is no one

particular measure that makes schools safer. It is a layered approach. It is about infrastructure, technology, and people. What it comes down to is technology does not respond to emergencies, people do, and it is important that they have the training to respond effectively."

Accompanied by Yorktown Town Clerk Diana Quast, Yorktown Town Supervisor Ilan Gilbert read a resolution unanimously approved by the members of the Town Council supporting the measures. Other concerned school officials from the Lakeland Central School District in attendance included Rachelle Nardelli, Vice President for the Board of Trustees, Board Members Michael Daley and Angela Conte, District Parent Council President Lynn Sachs, Thomas Jefferson Elementary School President Nicole Friedman, and Vice President Gina DeLaura. Everyone was in agreement that one of the most important people in attendance at the press conference was Robert Pavletich, the SRO for Copper Beech.