



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: Those making threats of mass violence must be held accountable

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 27, 2022

| ISSUE: **MASS VIOLENCE; SCHOOL THREATS**

Following several threats to area schools, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, is pushing legislation he has introduced that would criminalize threats of mass violence against schools, colleges and universities, places of worship and businesses and mass gatherings.

On Thursday, Oct. 20, Utica Police were dispatched to Jones Elementary School regarding a call that an active shooter situation was ongoing, according to police. The school was immediately placed on lockdown and students and staff were forced to wait behind locked doors while hidden from view. Upon the arrival of Utica police officers, it was quickly determined that no active shooter was ongoing and that the call was fictitious in nature.

Just six days later, another lockdown took place at Jones Elementary after the school received letters that contained “incoherent and disturbing language,” according to [media reports](#). The letters reportedly did not contain a direct threat to the school and Utica Police investigated the incident.

Threats also were made against Camden and Vernon-Verona-Sherrill high schools last month, according to [reports](#). Additional threats were made at North Broad Elementary School in Oneida and Herkimer Junior/Senior High School.

Sen. Griffo's bill (S3829), first introduced in 2018, would ensure that perpetrators of threats of mass violence are held accountable for their actions. State Assemblywoman Buttenschon has sponsored the bill (A1028) in the Assembly.

The bill would amend the penal law and establish a new crime of making a threat of mass violence toward a school, college or university, place of worship, mass gathering of 25 people or more or a business if the threat is made in writing, verbally communicated or expressed through any other means of communication.

The legislation creates two crimes:

- Making a threat of mass violence in the first degree would be considered a class D felony and would apply to anyone 18 years of age or older. The punishment for this crime would be a \$35,000 fine and a sentence of no less than three years in prison.
- Making a threat of mass violence in the second degree apply to individuals under the age of 18 and carry a fine of \$35,000 and a mandatory sentence of 10 days in a juvenile detention facility. Individuals over 18 who make a threat of mass violence against the school that they are attending would be charged with the same crime and administered the same punishment as an individual under the age of 18.

The bills are currently in the Senate's and Assembly's Codes committees.

"School has only been in session for a few months, and we have seen threats of mass violence made in various schools districts in the region," **Sen. Griffo said.** "The individuals making these disturbing threats must know that there are serious repercussions and consequences for their actions. This bill will ensure that those responsible for these threats, which cause widespread fear and disruption and come at significant cost to the communities in which they occur, are punished accordingly."