



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Griffo and Buttenschon: Time to act on legislation criminalizing threats of violence against mass gatherings

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO March 31, 2023

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Following **threats** to several area school districts and others in the state, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome, and Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-Marcy, are urging the Senate and Assembly to take action on legislation they have proposed that would ensure that perpetrators of threats of mass violence are held accountable for their actions.

On Thursday, Utica Police were dispatched to Proctor High School to investigate a report of gunfire, according to the police department. The department reported that the threat was not credible and that normal educational activities had resumed at the school. Rome Police were called to Rome Free Academy for a similar call. Officers there determined that there was no active shooter.

In a Twitter post, New York State Police indicated that the agency was “aware of swatting incidents that have occurred across the state, in which a caller states that there is an active shooter in a school. All of the reports are unfounded. We are working alongside our federal & local partners to investigate the threats.”

The suspicious calls come after a shooting at a school in Nashville, Tenn., earlier this week.

Sen. Griffo and Assemblywoman Buttenschon’s 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.

Sen. Griffo's bill is currently in the Senate's Codes committees. Assemblywoman Buttenschon is reintroducing her bill.

"These deplorable threats cause widespread fear and disruption, especially at a time when many parents, schools and communities are already on edge following the recent school shooting in Tennessee," **Sen. Griffo said**. "The perpetrators of these heinous threats must be held accountable for their actions. They need to know that there are real consequences and serious repercussions for deciding to threaten mass violence at schools and other locations. My legislation will ensure that the individuals making these threats are punished accordingly."

"Our nation and state have seen an increase in mass violence and this legislation was created to combat this crisis," **Assemblywoman Buttenschon said**. "I will continue to work with my colleague to stop this violence in our communities."

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