



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Engaging the Community: Perspectives on School Security

September 26, 2019

I want to take a moment to specifically thank Lauren Hogg and Max Schachter for being here today. What you both went through is something no person in our country should have to, but, sadly, it happens all too often. I commend you for being able to take your pain and turn it into action so other people may not have to go through what you and your loved ones did. Your bravery and courage does not go unnoticed.

It has been 20 years since the Columbine High School massacre, where 13 people lost their lives, and schools remain vulnerable to attack. In 2007, I chaired a full Committee hearing after the Virginia Tech shooting to learn more about protecting our nation's schools. We sit here today, over 12 years later, grappling with the same issues while the country has experienced tragedy after tragedy. The names Sandy Hook Elementary School, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, and others are forever in our memories because of the tragic shootings within their walls. These tragedies not only senselessly take innocent lives but do so much to inhibit focus and learning by invoking fear and anxiety among students, faculty, and staff, alike.

Despite the obvious need for improved school security measures, the sad truth is that the Federal government has not done enough to address school security concerns and keep weapons out of the hands of those who would do our children harm. It has become increasingly clear that we cannot depend on the Trump Administration to make meaningful progress on issues related to school security. The Federal School Safety Commission did not seriously consider the issue of guns— though guns are the weapon of choice in instances of deadly school violence. In addition, the Trump Administration and Republican leadership in the Senate refuse to come to the table with the House to take common sense steps to mitigate gun violence in schools. Several states are working to help address these shortcomings and by-passing gun safety laws and making other significant investments in school security improvements. I hope that Congress and the White House can be a help rather than a hindrance to those efforts.

I applaud the Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Subcommittee for the work it continues to do on these efforts. In addition to holding this hearing and a field hearing in New Jersey, Chairman Payne has introduced legislation to make a positive impact on school security, like H.R. 1593, the CLASS Act, which would ensure that the Department of Homeland Security's various school security initiatives are coordinated. This measure passed the House in April. I look forward to continuing the important discussion today on what more Congress can do to enhance school security in America and appreciate all those joining us.

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