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**Protecting Our Future: Addressing School Security Challenges in America**

Good Morning Chairman Donovan, Ranking Member Payne, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am honored to speak on behalf of the dedicated professionals of the New Jersey State Police. I am Major Jeanne Hengemuhle, Commanding Officer of the Division Human Resources Section of the New Jersey State Police.

The Division of State Police consists of four primary Branches: Administration, Investigations, Homeland Security, and Operations. Through these Branches, the Division preserves the ability to augment assets to address all-hazards and threats from a holistic approach. Each Branch works both independently and in concert, as they pool resources to address the State's most pressing concerns. The members within these branches actively seek out and maintain crucial relationships with outside agencies, community leaders, school administrators and other stakeholders to promote our abilities to counter school violence and to implement initiatives on school safety and security.

Under the Direction of Attorney General Grewal, School Safety and Security has been enhanced. On March 26<sup>th</sup> of this year, General Grewal updated Directive 2016-7, to add school to the list of soft targets on Suspicious Activities Reports. By doing this, all threats of violence against schools (in any form, through any medium and from any source) are reported to the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center (ROIC) and the County Terrorism Coordinator. Now, the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (O.H.S.P.) and the ROIC can analyze, track and disseminate threats against schools on a joint Intelligence Dissemination Report which reaches law enforcement and School Superintendents statewide, to name just a few entities. This flow of information allows New Jersey law enforcement to strengthen their ability to deter and/or stop school violence.

School safety and security plans as mandated by the Department of Education in (6A:16-5.1), effectively outline the State's approach in preparing for threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the security and safety of New Jersey schools. Through the direction of the Department of Education, all school districts in New Jersey are required to have a school safety and security plan. Each plan must be designed locally with the help of law enforcement, emergency management officials, public health officials, and other key stakeholders. All plans must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. These plans include procedures to respond to critical incidents ranging from bomb threats, fires and gas leaks, to an active shooter situation. All plans for those schools located in State Police patrolled area are housed in both hard copy and electronic copy so they are immediately available to troopers if an emergent situation occurs.

The threat and reality of an active shooter situation in our schools has become all too familiar in the United States. While, here in New Jersey, we have been generally spared from the truly horrific events that have plagued other communities, we still need to plan accordingly, collaborate, and to trust in our partner agencies in order to prevent these criminal acts. In the past, the New Jersey State Police has assumed a signature role in defending the State and its communities against these crimes. However, a justly comprehensive preparedness plan is a communal responsibility that requires a public effort in promoting safety and resilience through shared common goals and trust. It is vital that all partners build, organize and enhance security and safety capabilities in a unified approach to be better prepared to counter all-hazards and threats in our communities and schools.

One constant message across all Branches within the Division is to develop innovative strategies and partnerships with public and private entities to prevent, protect and respond to threats that specifically target our schools. Evidence of this resides within the School Safety & Outreach Unit, which was recreated under the Division's Recruiting & Employee Development Bureau, and is principally responsible for school safety and community outreach programs. They have established a partnership with the Department of Education, Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning. Members of the School Safety & Outreach Unit have participated in and supported school safety and security planning efforts, which include "Unannounced Visits / Drills (UAD)," instructing anti-bullying and anti-violence programs, and delivering drug prevention programs (such as, Law Enforcement Against Drugs – L.E.A.D.).

The New Jersey State Police participates in the majority of the UAD's conducted state wide. Led by the Department of Education, the unannounced drills provide technical assistance and support to schools with their preparedness efforts, while sharing best practices observed in other districts. The evaluation of the drill is informational and provides an opportunity for cooperative collaboration. Only one scenario is drilled: Active Shooter. As of 6/12/18, 66 unannounced drills were conducted state wide.

By presenting and instructing anti-bullying, anti-violence, and drug prevention programs, the Division is afforded the opportunity to address several concerns simultaneously. The most obvious benefit is establishing trust between communities and their schools and law enforcement officials. Further, these programs provide the State Police with an avenue to stage a steady and visible deterrence for those who may pose a threat or intend to inflict harm on our communities and in our schools. Lastly, having troopers instruct in the L.E.A.D. program, demonstrates the State Police's commitment to protecting our youth and communities from the proliferation of drugs, drug related crimes, peer to peer/cyber bullying, and violence.

The Division has also partnered with the O.H.S.P., in a coordinated effort in the planning, and active participation in "Active Shooter Exercises." These exercises are intended to test our abilities in responding effectively and efficiently to any hazards and threats to our communities and schools. Specialized units and personnel are dedicated from both the Division's Homeland Security and Operations Branches as they coordinate their responses in these drills. The New Jersey State Police has looked at best practices on responding to an Active Shooter incident and has just begun rolling out a restructure of our current protocols.

Field Operations Troopers normally assigned to general police stations throughout the State, have received additional training, certifications, and are positioned as school resource troopers for 9 regional high schools. They have the ability to immediately respond to all-hazards and threats, while providing instruction to students on a variety of topics and lessons at the school administration's request. The trooper's presence

also provides a sense of comfort and deterrence, while further building public and community trust in law enforcement.

Finally, in an attempt to further bolster school safety and public trust in law enforcement, the Superintendent, Colonel Patrick Callahan, with support from the Governor and Attorney General, has encouraged all enlisted members to visit schools where the State Police is the sole provider of law enforcement services. These unannounced visits take place while members are traversing the State during the course of their day or en-route to and from their primary work assignment. The randomness of this program also affords the State Police another layer of security via visible deterrence, while building community relations and trust with school officials. In order to promote an open line of communication, all 21 county prosecutors received a letter from Colonel Callahan informing them of this initiative.

The State Police must establish community relationships and maintain public trust in order to continue to educate, detect, deter, prevent and respond effectively to all-hazards and threats. Collaboration and community trust are essential components that need to be developed and fostered in order to sustain strong relations with our community leaders and school administrators. The reality is, the State Police, or any single law enforcement entity, lacks the personnel to appropriately address all-hazards and threats independently. The State Police must approach our training, response, deterrence, and initiatives from a global perspective, while partnering with community leaders, school officials, outside law enforcement agencies, and State Departments and Offices to better serve and protect the citizens of this State.

The collaborative working relationship between the State Police and the Governor's office, Office of Attorney General, Office of Homeland Security and all of the Departments critical to school safety will allow New Jersey to strengthen our plans and responses with regard to school safety.