



## **House Communications & Technology Committee**

### **Public Hearing Agenda**

Monday, November 17, 2025

9:30 am

515 Irvis Office Building

9:30am **Call to Order**

**Committee Member Introductions**

**Opening Remarks**

9:40am **Panel 1:**

- Lori Alhadeff, CEO, Make Our Schools Safe
- William Fullerton, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, CENTEGIX

10:00am **Panel 2:**

- Heather Masshardt, Deputy Director for School Safety, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)
- Crawford Gingrich, Director of School Safety, Pennsylvania School Safety Institute (PennSSI)

10:25am **Panel 3:**

- Chief David L. Nash, President, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association; Chief of Police, Northern York County Regional Police Department
- Scott L. Bohn, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association
- Dr. Beth J. Sanborn, President, Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers (PASRO)

10:55am **Closing Remarks**

**Adjournment**

Written Testimony Only:

- Raptor Technologies
- Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA)

## PA House Communications & Technology Committee hearing on HB 634

Chairmen and Committee Members, my name is Lori Alhadeff. I am here in support of HB 634. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am here on behalf of Make Our Schools Safe, but more importantly, as a mother. I'm Alyssa's mom.

Seven years ago, I said goodbye to my daughter for the last time. It was Valentine's Day, and she was sad because she didn't have a Valentine. I got her a box of chocolates and a pair of earrings to cheer her up. I helped her put the earrings in, told her I loved her and took her to school.

Hours later, I got the text: Shots fired at Stoneman Douglas High School. Kids running and jumping the fence. I texted Alyssa and told her to run and hide, that help was on the way.

But on that day, help did not arrive quickly enough. She wasn't alerted fast enough, and students didn't go into their safety protocols quickly enough. Alyssa and seventeen others died that day.

That is why the principle of Alyssa's Law is so simple: TIME = LIFE. I believe that if a call for help had gone out immediately and the school had gone into lockdown, Alyssa and many others would still be with us today.

Today, you have the opportunity to advance Alyssa's Law here in Pennsylvania. HB 634 is a critical layer of school safety. When seconds matter, we need a direct connection with first responders and to ensure that kids and teachers can quickly find safety.

This technology will not and should not replace other safety measures—it enhances them. School safety requires a layered approach, and this solution connects the entire campus with multisensory notifications and alerts so that every student and classroom can move to safety.

This would help not only during active threat situations, which we all hope will never happen, but also during medical emergencies, weather events, and other essential lockdown notifications that keep our kids safe.

We miss our daughter every day and we have dedicated our lives to keep others from experiencing our pain. We created our nonprofit organization, Make Our School Safe or MOSS, with the mission to empower students and staff to help create and maintain a

culture of safety and vigilance in a secure school environment. MOSS aims to pass Alyssa's Law nationwide as a standard level of school safety protection in every school.

You have the chance to be a leader in school safety. Ten states have already passed similar school safety measures through Alyssa's Law, and I urge Pennsylvania to join that growing list.

With the rising concerns around school violence, parents, students, and teachers in Pennsylvania deserve the peace of mind that comes from knowing help can be summoned at the push of a button.

No parent should have to experience losing a child this way. Alyssa was fourteen. She loved going to the beach and going shopping with her friends. She loved to play soccer and be with her family. Alyssa should still be here with us today.

Please pass Alyssa's Law.

Thank you for your time, and Rep. Cepeda-Freytiz and this committee for your leadership. I have included more details on Alyssa's Law in the handout, and I am available for any questions.



**House Communications and Technology Committee  
Public Hearing on HB 634  
Monday, November 17, 2025**

**Testimony of  
Heather Masshardt, Deputy Director of School Safety  
Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency**

Thank you, Chairman Ciresi, Chairman Ortitay, and members of the House Communications and Technology Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony to you today on behalf of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). I am Heather Masshardt, and I serve as the Deputy Director of School Safety for PCCD.

PCCD was established in 1978 and serves as the Commonwealth's justice planning and policymaking agency. Our mission is to enhance the quality, coordination, and planning within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, to facilitate the delivery of services to victims of crime, and to increase the safety of our communities. PCCD's responsibilities and programs fall into a number of different areas, including funding and grants, training and technical assistance, data and research, victims' compensation, and school safety and security support, among other responsibilities. We are directed by an overarching Commission board, which is advised by different advisory committees and two training boards. Since 2018, PCCD has also housed the state's School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC). The Committee is made up of members of the General Assembly and leaders or designees of state agencies, including the Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, the PA State Police Commissioner, the Secretary of Education, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Human Services, and other subject matter experts appointed by the Governor's office. It also includes several individuals who work directly in schools on a daily basis, including a school police officer, a school psychologist, a principal, a school nurse, and a Superintendent.

The SSSC was created through Act 44 of 2018, which originally established many of the requirements related to school safety in Article XIII-B of the PA Public School Code, including initiating PCCD's School Safety and Security Grant Program. Since the Committee's creation, several Acts have added additional responsibilities and refined the work of the Committee, including Act 18 of 2019, which added responsibilities in the area of Threat Assessment; Act 67 of 2019, which established parameters for school security personnel; Act 55 of 2022, which added training requirements and responsibilities for public school employees and School Safety and Security Coordinators; and Act 55 of 2024, which added a requirement for at least one trained school security personnel at each school district.

Through approval of the School Safety and Security Committee, PCCD administers the School Safety and Security Grant Program, which provides grants to public and nonpublic school entities to address both physical security needs and student behavioral health needs. Grant programs have been

available to schools nearly every year since the School Safety and Security Grant Program was established. The amount of funding available and the eligible expenses for use of grant funding has varied over the years. For FY 2024-25, \$100 million in state funding was made available through noncompetitive formula grants to public school entities, which includes school districts, intermediate units, career and technical centers, and charter and cyber charter schools; \$20.7 million in state funding was made available for targeted school safety grants for nonpublic schools. This grant funding could be used on either physical security or behavioral health expenses that are deemed allowable under the grant program, at the discretion of the school entity.

Section 1306-B of the PA Public School Code outlines 32 areas of allowable activities for PCCD's school safety and mental health grants.<sup>1</sup> These range from supporting school security personnel and school counselors or psychologists, to implementing school-based diversion programs, safety and security assessments, training programs, and purchasing lockable cell phone bags. The allowable activity category that often includes the highest volume of funding requests for physical security is the following:

*“(12) Security planning and purchase of security-related technology, which may include metal detectors, protective lighting, specialty trained canines, surveillance equipment, special emergency communications equipment, automated external defibrillators, electronic locksets, deadbolts, trauma kits and theft control devices and training in the use of security-related technology.”<sup>2</sup>*

Panic alarm systems, which are the topic of House Bill 634, and today's hearing, would fall into this category of allowable expense when included in a grant funding application.

One other important factor to note regarding the School Safety and Security Grant Program is that amendments enacted through Act 55 of 2022 updated grant-related provisions to link grant-related activities to a set of “Baseline Criteria” guidance for school safety originally adopted by the SSSC in 2021, and subsequently revised in 2023. The Baseline Criteria were developed in collaboration with practitioners and subject matter experts as a resource to help schools organize and prioritize both physical security and behavioral health related services, trainings, policies, programs, equipment, and activities into a multi-leveled structure from Level 1, which is considered the most basic set of elements to address safety and security, to Level 3, which lists the most advanced elements.

Current School Code provisions for the grant program require that school entities use their grant funding toward Level 1 items prior to expending funds on Level 2 or 3 items, or other allowable expenses. Currently, “panic alarms that can be activated from the office and/or within other areas of the building in case of emergency, and training for their use” is listed as a Level 3 item in the Baseline Criteria for physical security.<sup>3</sup> This means that a school entity would need to meet all Level 1 items in the Baseline Criteria for physical security prior to using their grant funding to purchase panic alarms.

Pursuant to Section 1306-B of the Public School Code, information submitted by school entities as part of the grant application that is sensitive (e.g., the disclosure of which would be reasonably likely to result in a substantial and demonstrable risk of physical harm or the personal security of students or staff) is required to remain confidential and is not subject to Pennsylvania's

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<sup>1</sup> PA Public School Code, [24 P.S. 13-1306-B](#).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> [Revised Physical Security Baseline Criteria Standards \(2023\)](#).

Right-to-Know Law.<sup>4</sup> The Committee has discretion to release aggregate data regarding the school safety and security grants, but out of an abundance of caution has historically decided not to release data related to physical security of students, staff, and school buildings. They have released aggregate data regarding student behavioral health and student assistance supports periodically. PCCD can share that panic alarm systems have been funded through the School Safety and Security Grant Program and they are an allowable expense for those school entities that have fulfilled Baseline Criteria requirements, but we are not able to provide details from the grant applications regarding those specific expenditures at this time.

While physical security measures - like panic alarms - play a role in emergency response, they are not standalone solutions. School safety is built on a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, early intervention, mental health supports, staff training, and community collaboration. When implemented as part of a broader, integrated school safety framework that prioritizes the well-being and preparedness of students, staff, first responders, and the entire school community, technology can enhance safety.

To that end, PCCD and the School Safety and Security Committee work to provide a continuum of supports that span prevention through response, addressing both physical school security and student behavioral health safety and support. Schools are encouraged to use the Committee's approved assessment criteria and related tools to identify local strengths and gaps. Training for School Safety and Security Coordinators and all school employees in the areas of situational awareness, trauma-informed approaches, behavioral health awareness, suicide and bullying awareness, substance use, and emergency training drills are also an important component. PCCD and the School Safety and Security Committee also encourage and support schools through training and reporting requirements to build collaborative relationships with law enforcement agencies and other local first responders as a critical element of communication and response in an emergency. PCCD also provides training and technical assistance for behavioral threat assessment teams and helps staff recognize behaviors and conduct that may signal safety concerns. These efforts, along with grant-funded physical security measures, form a comprehensive approach to school safety.

We appreciate the leadership of the Shapiro-Davis Administration and members of the General Assembly, who have consistently called for enactment of additional resources - both physical security and mental and behavioral health - that help make Pennsylvania schools safe, welcoming places for all students to learn and thrive. We believe that the investments made through the School Safety and Mental Health Grants program have made a tangible difference in the safety and well-being of Pennsylvania's students, educators, school staff, and communities.

Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.

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<sup>4</sup> PA Public School Code, [24 P.S. 13-1306-B](#).



**TESTIMONY OF THE**

**PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**

**NOVEMBER 17, 2025**

**CRAWFORD GINGRICH**

**PENNSSI - DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL SAFETY**

Chairman Ciresi, Chairman Ortity, and members of the House Communications and Technology Committee, thank you for inviting the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) and School Safety Institute (PennSSI) to testify today on panic alarms in schools on behalf of the 5,000 local public school leaders across the Commonwealth. I am Crawford Gingrich, Director of School Safety for the Pennsylvania School Safety Institute. As the director, I'm proud to lead a team that's committed to helping school safety professionals and administrators prepare for the challenges they face every day. Our goal is to provide meaningful, realistic training that strengthens school professionals' readiness and confidence.

I have over three decades of experience in law enforcement, criminal investigation, operational security, and emergency services. I've served as a police sergeant, criminal investigator, and patrol officer, led security and fraud operations for a regional bank, and completed advanced training in cybersecurity, digital forensics and critical incident response. My background also includes military service in the U.S. Army, where I specialized in communications, information systems, and reconnaissance. I hold a bachelor's degree in Cybersecurity Analytics and Operations with a focus on law and policy.

Schools today face a wide range of internal and external threats. Everything from targeted violence and intruders to medical emergencies and severe weather. While prevention and mental health supports are essential, rapid alerting and response during an emergency can mean the difference between life and death. Traditional methods like dialing 911 or using intercoms are often slow and chaotic under stress. Silent panic alarms change that.

These systems provide a direct, discreet link to law enforcement, transmitting precise location data and triggering faster, coordinated action. The benefits are clear:

- Speed saves lives: Pilot schools report response times reduced by 30–50%.
- Discretion reduces risk: Staff can summon help without alerting the threat.
- Integration improves coordination: Systems connect directly with dispatch and security teams.
- Versatility supports all emergencies: From medical crises to intruders, help is summoned instantly.

Every second counts. But here's the reality: a panic button alone isn't enough. Many schools assume pressing the button automatically gives 911 all the details they need. In truth, if the system isn't integrated with emergency dispatch and carefully implemented, critical gaps emerge—delays, miscommunication, and lack of situational awareness.

Common pitfalls include:

- Alerts that don't reach 911 directly.
- Accidental activations causing confusion and wasted resources.
- Limited context when responders arrive not knowing where or what's happening.
- Disjointed systems that block real-time coordination.

The solution? Thoughtful implementation and collaboration. Best practices include:

1. Engage emergency responders early to ensure compatibility and direct integration.
2. Map out response protocols for different scenarios.
3. Include precise location and data sharing—floor plans, camera feeds, real-time updates.
4. Train and drill regularly with staff and first responders, including temporary staff when able.
5. Assign clear points of contact for communication during incidents.
6. Choose systems that work seamlessly with existing public safety platforms.

Silent panic alarms can be powerful tools but only when backed by planning, training, and integration. A panic button without a plan is a false sense of security. The goal must be simple. Get help on the way faster and with the right information.

Chairman Ciresi, Chairman Ortity, and members of the committee, thank you for your attention to this critical issue. Silent panic alarms can be a life-saving tool, but their effectiveness depends on thoughtful planning, integration, and training. A button without a plan is not secure; it's a false sense of safety. By ensuring systems are fully connected to emergency dispatch, supported by clear protocols, and reinforced through regular drills, we can give schools the confidence that help will arrive quickly and with the right information. PSBA and the Pennsylvania School Safety Institute stand ready to work with you and our public safety partners to make these best practices a reality across the Commonwealth. Together, we can strengthen school safety and protect the lives of students and staff.

# *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association*

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## **Testimony of Chief David L. Lash**

### **Before the Pennsylvania House Communications and Technology Committee**

### **In Support of House Bill 634 – Alyssa’s Law**

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. My name is David L. Lash, and I serve as the Chief of Police for the Northern York County Regional Police Department and as President of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association. It is my privilege to represent both my department and the broader law enforcement community in speaking in strong support of House Bill 634, commonly known as Alyssa’s Law.

### **The Meaning Behind Alyssa’s Law**

Alyssa’s Law is named in memory of Alyssa Alhadeff, a 14-year-old student tragically killed in the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

In the aftermath of that tragedy, her parents, Lori and Ilan Alhadeff, turned their grief into action—advocating for faster, more direct communication between schools and law enforcement during life-threatening events.

Every law enforcement officer knows that during an active threat, seconds save lives.

Traditional 911 calls are vital, but they can take valuable time—time teachers do not have when facing a shooter in the hallway or a medical emergency in the classroom.

Alyssa’s Law addresses this gap by requiring schools to have silent panic-alert systems that directly and instantly notify law enforcement and emergency responders, providing location-specific information to speed response and coordination.

### **National Adoption and Momentum – Where the Country Stands**

Since New Jersey first enacted Alyssa’s Law in 2019, the pace of adoption has accelerated nationwide. As of October 2025, at least eleven states have adopted some form of Alyssa’s Law or a similar requirement for silent panic-alert systems in K–12 schools.

Recent analysis by the Security Industry Association (SIA) notes that Georgia, Washington, and Oregon all passed legislation in 2025, joining earlier adopters: New Jersey (2019), Florida (2020), New York (2022), Texas (2023), Tennessee (2023), Utah (2024), Oklahoma (2024), and Louisiana (2024) .

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The nonprofit Make Our Schools Safe, founded by Alyssa's family, also highlighted Oregon's 2025 passage and its alignment with the state's Wireless Panic Alarm Grant Program .

While each state structures implementation differently, several common features have emerged:

- Direct alerts to 911/dispatch and law enforcement with room-level location data.
- Integration with existing emergency operations plans and command protocols.
- Grant or reimbursement funding to support compliance and ease budget impact.
- Mandatory training for staff and law enforcement to ensure consistent use.
- Compliance timelines — typically 12–24 months — for full deployment statewide.

Examples of state programs include:

- Georgia (2025): House Bill 268 mandates silent panic alerts in all schools by July 1, 2026.
- Washington (2025): Senate Bill 5004 requires local planning with law enforcement and includes dedicated grants for system implementation.
- Oregon (2025): House Bill 3083 mandates installation statewide, leveraging preexisting emergency communications funding.
- Texas (2023): House Bill 3, passed after the tragedy in Uvalde, requires panic-alert technology in every school.
- Florida (2020): The Alyssa's Alert Program expanded the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Act to include silent panic systems linked directly to law enforcement.
- New York (2022): Adopted state guidance integrating panic-alert technology into school safety planning and capital funding.

At the federal level, the Alyssa's Law: ALYSSA Act has been introduced multiple times in Congress to establish national standards and funding. Though not yet enacted, it reflects bipartisan consensus that direct, rapid communication between schools and first responders is essential to save lives.

This growing national consensus underscores the urgency for Pennsylvania to act now, ensuring that our schools have the same life-saving tools as those in other states.

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## **The Case for Pennsylvania – Why HB 634 Matters Now**

Pennsylvania has made major strides in school safety — from School Resource Officers (SROs) and threat-assessment teams to facility hardening and training. Yet one crucial gap remains: instantaneous communication with law enforcement the moment an emergency begins.

When a teacher identifies a threat, every second between recognition and response counts. House Bill 634 closes that gap by requiring silent panic-alert systems that connect directly to 911 and local police dispatch. From a policing standpoint, these systems enhance not only notification speed but also situational awareness, command coordination, and officer safety — enabling better decisions under stress and minimizing casualties.

## **Pennsylvania Implementations Already Underway**

Fortunately, several districts across our Commonwealth have already taken the initiative, demonstrating that these systems work in both urban and rural settings.

- Dover Area School District (York County) – Deploying Intrado Safety Shield, which provides wearable panic buttons and mobile app alerts that send direct, location-based notifications to law enforcement.
- Canon-McMillan School District (Washington County) – Using CENTEGIX CrisisAlert wearable badges that transmit discreet, room-level alerts directly to dispatch.
- Plum Borough School District (Allegheny County) – Adopted the CENTEGIX CrisisAlert system, becoming the first in western Pennsylvania to implement it district-wide.
- Rockwood Area School District (Somerset County) – Installed a Rauland critical-communications system with panic buttons and classroom lights, funded through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).
- Delaware County (Countywide) – Since 2013, all 230 public, private, and parochial schools have operated the DelPASS system, which alerts 911 directly during emergencies.
- Abrams Hebrew Academy (Bucks County) – Installed panic-alarm and camera systems through Pennsylvania's Non-Public School Safety Grant Program.

These examples show that this technology is already succeeding across Pennsylvania. HB 634 will provide consistency, funding equity, and uniform protection for all students across Pennsylvania.

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## **School Shootings and Critical Incidents in Pennsylvania – Last 5 Years**

Pennsylvania has experienced multiple active-shooter events, violent threats, and lockdowns in recent years, each reinforcing the need for rapid, verified communication between schools and law enforcement.

- Erie High School (Erie County) – April 5, 2022: A 14-year-old student shot and wounded another student inside the school. The victim survived. The shooter pleaded guilty in 2024 and received an 8½–17-year prison sentence .
- York County – 2024–2025: Several school districts, including Central York, Dover, and Dallastown, endured repeated lockdowns from credible social-media threats. These incidents mobilized large police responses and disrupted classes for thousands of students .
- Threat Increase (2024): According to Axios Philadelphia, Pennsylvania schools saw a 50% increase in threats in 2024 compared to the year prior, with Philadelphia schools reporting an 80% spike.

Beyond the classroom, active-threat events across Pennsylvania have revealed vulnerabilities in communication and coordination — lessons directly relevant to schools.

- UPMC Memorial Hospital (York County) – February 22, 2025: A gunman entered the ICU, holding staff hostage and firing multiple rounds. West York Borough Police Officer Andrew Duarte and the perpetrator were killed in the ensuing exchange. The incident highlighted the critical importance of immediate notification and unified response across multiple agencies . The incident not only claimed lives but revealed how quickly violence can erupt in even the most secure facilities—and how essential direct, unified alerting systems are for saving lives. The same principle applies in our schools, where seconds can make the difference between tragedy and rescue.
- Statewide Trends: According to the PCCD Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Pennsylvania recorded over 110 mass-shooting incidents from 2021–2025, leaving 88 dead and 452 injured . While not all occurred in schools, they underscore the urgency of equipping every institution with rapid-alert capabilities.

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## **Law Enforcement Perspective – Seconds Save Lives**

From a law enforcement perspective, the first few minutes of any active threat are the most critical—and often the most chaotic.

Dispatchers are receiving multiple 911 calls, radio traffic is overlapping, and officers are trying to locate the source of danger in a maze of buildings and information.

## **Silent panic-alert systems change that dynamic.**

When activated, they can:

- Instantly notify dispatchers and responding officers,
- Transmit precise location data (building, floor, room),
- Activate digital maps or live video feeds, and
- Notify school administrators and SROs simultaneously.

This gives first responders the clarity they need to move immediately and decisively.

It improves coordination, reduces confusion, and allows incident commanders to allocate resources where they are most needed.

Equally important is the psychological benefit. Teachers who know they can instantly reach help feel more secure and focused during emergencies.

Officers who receive verified, accurate data experience less uncertainty and make calmer, more disciplined decisions under stress.

In my 33 years of law enforcement, I've seen how communication failures can turn seconds into minutes—and minutes into tragedy.

These systems help eliminate that delay.

They ensure the first responding officers know where to go, what they're facing, and who needs help.

They are not just a technical solution; they are a force multiplier for law enforcement and a lifeline for our educators.

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## **Beyond Technology – A Moral Imperative**

Alyssa's Law is not just a technical improvement; it's a moral commitment.

It honors the memory of Alyssa Alhadeff and every student, teacher, and officer lost to preventable tragedy. It gives educators the power to act decisively and officers the tools to respond effectively.

We have a duty — a moral and professional one — to ensure that Pennsylvania's schools are never left waiting for help that could have arrived seconds sooner.

## **Conclusion**

Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Alyssa's Law is practical, proven, and lifesaving. It builds on Pennsylvania's strong foundation in school safety and ensures that when danger strikes, help can be summoned in seconds, not minutes.

The technology exists, the success stories are real, and the need is undeniable. I respectfully urge this committee and the General Assembly to pass House Bill 634 and make Pennsylvania a leader in proactive, technology-based school protection.

If we can prevent even one tragedy, protect one classroom, or bring one child home safely because of this legislation—then Alyssa's legacy, and our shared commitment to public safety, will have meaning that lasts generations.

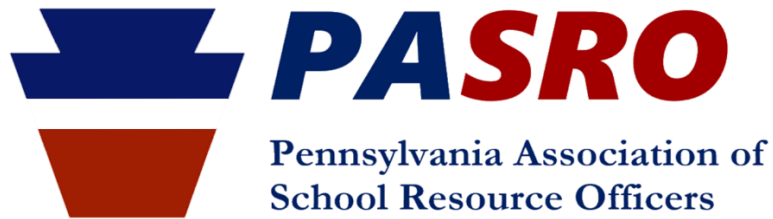
Thank you for your time, your service, and your commitment to protecting Pennsylvania's students.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Chief David L. Lash**

**President, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association**

**Chief of Police, Northern York County Regional Police Department**



Beth Sanborn, President ▼ John Aston, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President ▼ Aaron Skrbini, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

# Written Testimony of Dr. Beth J. Sanborn

## President, Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers (PASRO)

Before the Pennsylvania House Communications & Technology Committee  
Re: Panic Alarm Systems in Schools  
October 31, 2025

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### Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers Leadership:

- Dr. Beth J. Sanborn, President
- John Aston, 1st Vice President
- Dr. Aaron Skrbini, 2nd Vice President

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Good morning, Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Beth J. Sanborn, and I am honored to appear before you today as President of the Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers (PASRO). I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the proposed legislative language encouraging Pennsylvania schools to consider panic alarm systems as an integral component of their comprehensive safety and security review processes.

### Background on PASRO and Our Mission

PASRO represents School Resource Officers, School Police Officers, and School Security Officers throughout the Commonwealth who dedicate themselves daily to protecting our students, educators, and school communities. Our members serve on the front lines of school safety, working collaboratively with administrators, teachers, students, families, and local law enforcement agencies to create secure learning environments where children can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Our organization is committed to promoting best practices in school-based law enforcement, advancing professional development and training standards, and advocating for evidence-based policies that enhance school safety across Pennsylvania's diverse educational landscape, from large urban districts to small rural communities.

## The Critical Importance of Rapid Emergency Response

In school safety and security operations, response time is not merely important; it is often the determining factor between life and death. Our School Resource Officers and School Security Officers understand intimately that during a critical incident, *every second counts*. Whether responding to an active threat, a medical emergency, or another crisis situation, the ability to immediately alert law enforcement and emergency responders can dramatically affect outcomes.

Traditional methods of emergency notification, including phone calls to 911, radio communications, or manual alarm pulls, (while helpful) each introduce delays that can prove catastrophic during rapidly evolving emergencies. Staff members in crisis situations may be unable to reach a phone, may not know their precise location within a building, or may be incapacitated. A dedicated panic alarm system addresses these vulnerabilities by providing immediate, automated notification to law enforcement with precise location data, enabling the fastest possible response.

## PASRO's Position on Panic Alarm Systems

PASRO views panic alarm systems as a valuable and meaningful addition to Pennsylvania's comprehensive school safety framework. We believe these systems represent a significant technological advancement that can enhance the safety and security infrastructure already in place across our schools.

**However, we must emphasize a critical principle: panic alarm systems should never be viewed as a singular solution or the sole line of defense in school safety planning.** While these systems are important tools, they are most effective when integrated into a comprehensive, multi-layered security approach that includes:

- Comprehensive training programs for all school personnel in threat recognition, emergency response protocols, and crisis de-escalation techniques
- Established communication protocols that ensure coordination between school staff, School Resource Officers, local law enforcement, emergency medical services, and mental health professionals
- Physical security enhancements including controlled access points, surveillance systems, improved lighting, and environmental design that promotes natural surveillance
- Strong, collaborative relationships between schools and local law enforcement agencies, fostered through regular training exercises, joint planning, and community engagement
- Mental health and behavioral threat assessment programs that focus on prevention and early intervention

- Regular safety audits and drills that test systems and prepare stakeholders for various emergency scenarios

A panic alarm system functions as one critical component within this layered defense strategy, not as a replacement for these other essential elements.

## **The Importance of Vendor Neutrality and Local Flexibility**

PASRO strongly supports maintaining vendor-neutral language in any legislation related to panic alarm systems. Pennsylvania's educational landscape is remarkably diverse. Our schools range from large urban districts serving thousands of students in multiple buildings to small rural schools operating with limited staff and resources. They encompass different architectural designs, varying technological infrastructure capabilities, and widely different operational budgets.

This diversity necessitates flexibility. School districts must retain the autonomy to select panic alarm systems that best align with their specific needs, existing technology platforms, building configurations, and available resources. Prescriptive requirements that favor particular vendors or technologies could force districts into solutions that are ill-suited to their unique circumstances, potentially wasting resources or creating systems that are less effective than alternatives.

Local school administrators, working in partnership with their School Resource Officers and local law enforcement agencies, are best positioned to determine which panic alarm technology will integrate most effectively with their existing safety protocols and infrastructure.

## **The Critical Need for Dedicated Funding**

While PASRO enthusiastically supports the adoption of panic alarm systems, we must address a significant practical barrier: funding. Many school districts across Pennsylvania, particularly smaller and rural districts, operate under severe budgetary constraints. These communities face difficult choices between competing priorities, all of which are essential to student welfare.

Without dedicated state funding or grant support, the requirement or strong encouragement to implement panic alarm systems may create an unfunded mandate that forces districts to divert resources from other critical areas such as educational programming, facility maintenance, or existing security personnel. This could inadvertently compromise overall school safety and educational quality.

It is essential to recognize that the financial burden extends well beyond initial installation costs. Panic alarm systems typically require ongoing expenses including annual maintenance fees, software licensing, subscription services for monitoring and data transmission, system upgrades, technical support, and periodic hardware replacement. These recurring costs can accumulate substantially over time and may exceed the initial installation investment. Districts that struggle

to install systems will find it even more difficult to sustain them year after year without dedicated operational funding.

**We respectfully urge the General Assembly to consider establishing dedicated funding mechanisms or competitive grant programs** that address both initial implementation and ongoing operational costs. Such support would:

- Ensure equitable access to this safety technology across all Pennsylvania schools, regardless of local wealth
- Prevent cost from becoming a barrier to student and staff safety
- Demonstrate the Commonwealth's genuine commitment to school security
- Allow districts to implement comprehensive systems rather than minimal, less effective solutions driven by budget limitations
- Enable smaller districts to afford not only initial installation but also ongoing maintenance, subscriptions, technical support, and system updates that are essential for long term functionality
- Prevent the creation of an unfunded mandate that could force districts into impossible financial positions or result in systems being installed but not properly maintained

Investment in school safety infrastructure, including panic alarm systems, is an investment in Pennsylvania's children and future. The return on this investment, measured in lives protected and learning environments secured, is immeasurable.

## **Integration with Broader School Safety Partnerships**

PASRO wishes to acknowledge and commend the recognition within this proposed legislation of the essential partnership between schools and law enforcement. Effective school safety is not achieved through technology alone, but through sustained collaboration between educators, law enforcement professionals, mental health providers, families, and community members.

School Resource Officers serve as a vital bridge in this partnership. We are not merely responders to crises but are deeply embedded in the daily life of our schools. We build relationships with students, provide mentorship, contribute to prevention efforts through education programs, and work proactively with school staff to identify and address potential threats before they escalate.

Panic alarm systems enhance our ability to fulfill this protective role by ensuring that we and our law enforcement partners can respond with maximum speed and coordination when prevention efforts are insufficient and a crisis emerges. These systems strengthen the web of protection that surrounds Pennsylvania's students.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In summary, the Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers:

1. **Strongly supports** the proposed legislative language encouraging schools to consider panic alarm systems as part of their comprehensive safety and security review processes
2. **Affirms** that panic alarm systems are valuable tools that can significantly improve emergency response times and outcomes during critical incidents
3. **Emphasizes** that panic alarm systems must be viewed as one component of a multi-layered, comprehensive school safety strategy, not as a standalone solution
4. **Advocates** for maintaining vendor-neutral language that provides school districts with the flexibility to select systems best suited to their unique needs and circumstances
5. **Strongly encourages** the General Assembly to establish dedicated funding or grant programs to support implementation, ensuring that cost does not become a barrier to safety for any Pennsylvania school district
6. **Commends** the Committee's recognition of the critical importance of school-law enforcement partnerships in protecting our Commonwealth's students and educators

The members of PASRO stand ready to serve as a resource to this Committee and to the General Assembly as you continue your vital work to enhance school safety across Pennsylvania. We are available to provide technical expertise, practical insights from our frontline experience, and assistance in developing implementation frameworks that ensure these systems achieve their intended protective purpose.

Thank you for your time, your attention to this critical issue, and your continued commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Pennsylvania's students, educators, and school communities. I welcome any questions you may have.

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**Respectfully submitted,**

***Dr. Beth J Sanborn***

**Dr. Beth J. Sanborn**

President

Pennsylvania Association of School Resource Officers (PASRO)

November 17, 2025

RE: House Bill 634 “An act relating to the public school system, including certain provisions applicable as well to private and parochial schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the laws relating thereto,” in school safety and security, further providing for school safety and security coordinator.

Dear Chairman Ciresi and Members of the House Communications and Technology Committee:

House Bill 634 is an excellent step forward in expediting and streamlining emergency response by allowing teachers and staff to initiate an emergency through panic alert technology directly to 911. This technology is proven and saves lives.

Raptor Technologies is the leader in K-12 panic alert technology. Our Raptor Alert enables teachers and staff to initiate an alert through a physical badge, a mobile app, or through a computer and is currently in over 20,000 schools across the country including 79 districts in Pennsylvania.

Raptor agrees with the recent Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee report released in March 2025 entitled *A Study Pursuant to Senate Resolution 178: A Review of Act 44 School Safety Initiatives*. The report provides an accurate depiction of options that could work for the state of Pennsylvania. Some remedies are legislative and require districts to consider panic alert technology. Others involve changing the eligible expense tier structure, making panic alert technology a higher priority for school safety funding. We agree that both are viable solutions, and the cost should be incurred by the state at an amount that is both affordable and sustainable.

Local control is a key component to successfully protecting students. Panic alert technology is not a one-size-fits-all solution. As we have seen across the country, for some districts the use of an app on a phone or desktop computer is the best way to relay key information to 911 and law enforcement. Other districts may prefer badges worn by teachers or administrators to communicate emergencies. Many have both, preferring the emergency context and two-way communications provided by a mobile app combined with the convenience of a badge. The Pennsylvania’s Legislative Budget and Finance Committee Report address these issues in a thoughtful way given budget constraints and state policy.

Raptor Technologies encourages you to pass and fund legislation that improves the safety environment and protects students, staff, and parents on campuses. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

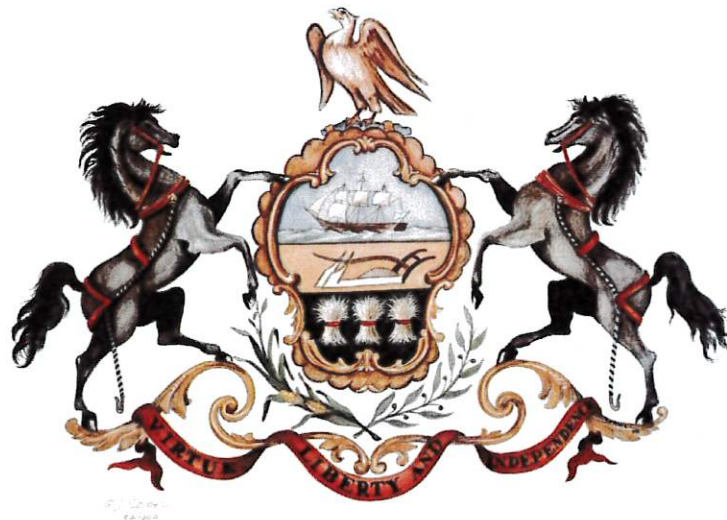
Julie Shields  
Vice President, Government Affairs

# LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## **A Study Pursuant to Senate Resolution 178: A Review of Act 44 School Safety Initiatives**

March 2025



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## Overall Report Recommendations

1. The PSP should increase the number of troopers assigned to RVAT or include non-PSP or civilian members to assist with the assessment process [See Section IV – pg. 81].
2. The SSSC should prioritize the periodic review of its school safety and security assessment criteria to bring the materials in line with the statutory requirements of the Public School Code [See Section IV – pg. 85].
3. The General Assembly should consider amending section 1305-B of the Public School Code to require school entities to submit copies of their pre-existing assessments to PCCD with any future iterations of the preparedness survey [See Section IV- pg. 87].
4. The General Assembly should consider amending section 1304-B of the Public School Code to require the SSSC to review the School Safety and Security Provider Registry at least every three years and make updates as needed [See Section IV – pg. 92].
5. The SSSC should require providers to report the number of assessments completed by type (physical assessments, student assistance, behavioral health, and school climate assessments) annually. [See Section IV – pg. 92].
6. PCCD should integrate information about the number of assessments completed by providers (as suggested above) into the registry so that school entities can better identify those more experienced professionals [See Section IV – pg. 92].
7. The General Assembly should consider amending section 1303-D of the Public School Code of 1949 as amended to require school entities to resolve all S2SS tips within 30 days of receipt by the school entities [See Section V – pg. 110].
8. OAG should provide School Safety and Security Coordinators with advanced training on proper tip disposition procedures so that tips are tracked and resolved according to best practices established by OAG [See Section V – pg. 110].
9. The General Assembly should consider amending section 1309-B of the Public School Code to require School Safety and Security Coordinators to provide annual attestations to the OAG that S2SS disposition information is accurate [See Section V – pg. 110].

10. The General Assembly should consider amending section 1304-D of the Public School Code to allow aggregated and redacted data sharing with the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee so that performance audits on tip dispositions can be conducted every five years. These audits will help ensure that school entities are adhering to established procedures [See Section V – pg. 110].
11. The General Assembly should consider amending the Public School Code to create a school safety and security coordinator certification similar to other nationally recognized professional accreditation processes [See Section V – pg. 116 and Section VI – pg. 140].
12. The SSSC should establish a set of performance metric criteria encompassing multiple information points related to school safety and security [See Section VI – pg. 134].
13. The SSSC should develop an annual report on school safety and security using the consolidation of all school safety and security data, including grant data [See Section VI – pg. 134].
14. PCCD should further expand school safety organizationally and create an "Office for School Safety" [See Section VI – pg. 137].
15. The SSSC should establish a youth/student advisory board within the SSSC [See Section VI – pg. 137].
16. The General Assembly should consider passing a requirement for panic button notification systems. We also recommend that these panic notification systems be implemented in a phased approach and with funding assistance [See Section VI – pg. 143].



2025. In Pennsylvania, co-sponsor memos to reintroduce Alyssa's Law legislation in the 2025-26 legislative session have been circulated.

Source: Developed by LBFC staff from [makeourschoolsafe.org](http://makeourschoolsafe.org) and review of other state legislation.

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As for applicability in Pennsylvania, "Alyssa Law" legislation was introduced in the previous legislative session but did not advance in either chamber. The bill is expected to be introduced again in the current legislative session.

Conceivably, there are alternatives to a legislative remedy. For example, panic button technology is an eligible expense under category 12 of Section 1306-B(J) of the PSC, and schools could seek funding for these systems. We checked with PCCD staff, who noted that panic buttons are not currently considered a Level 1, or basic, baseline criteria item or activity. Thus, school entities would need to ensure those items are fulfilled before pursuing panic button systems. We inquired about the possibility of the SSSC making panic button systems a higher priority, and staff noted the following:

...It is possible that the [SSSC] Committee may consider moving panic buttons to a Level 1 basic status. I would note, however, that most Level 1 basic items or activities are based on statutory mandates that schools must already meet according to the law.

The implementation cost for this system is also a significant consideration, but we could not define a specific cost estimate. We found that in Florida, the implementation cost at each school was \$2,000-\$8,000 per year. In Ohio, which recently introduced "Alyssa Law" legislation, the costs were estimated to be approximately \$15,000 per building, with annual maintenance costs. In Georgia, the system cost was approximately \$8,000 per school per year. As we reported in Section III, Texas allocated \$17.1 million for its Silent Alert Technology Grant program, which was used to provide direct grants to LEAs to purchase silent panic alert technologies. As a result, the cost for statewide implementation would be high for a state like Pennsylvania, which has a decentralized education system with many school buildings. Consequently, while we recommend that the General Assembly pass a requirement for panic button notification systems, we also recommend that it be done in a phased approach and with funding assistance. Further research is required to define the specific estimated costs.



## HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

### PSEA Comments on House Bill 634

On behalf of its 177,000 members, PSEA appreciates the opportunity to provide written comments on House Bill 634, which seeks to enhance school safety by requiring school entities to consider implementing panic alarm systems linked directly to law enforcement.

Too many times, communities have been torn apart by the unthinkable: violence in our schools. We honor the life of Alyssa Alhadeff and all victims of school shootings whose families continue to advocate for stronger protections. Their courage reminds us that safety planning must never be complacent.

Educators and education support professionals are deeply supportive of any strategies that make our schools safer. PSEA supports the spirit and intent of “Alyssa’s Law” — ensuring schools have access to life-saving tools that enable rapid response when every second matters. By including panic alarms as an item for consideration by the school safety and security coordinator, the bill acknowledges that schools must constantly review and refine their emergency protocols.

As we all know, Pennsylvania is a diverse state. Tioga and Philadelphia counties are very different places, and a one-size-fits-all solution is simply impractical in the school safety context. As lawmakers consider ideas to make schools safer, it is important to preserve flexibility and local autonomy so that locally elected officials, administrators, and educators can determine and prioritize the most effective prevention and response strategies for their school communities and make the best use of the resources available to them.

PSEA appreciates that House Bill 634 maintains this local autonomy by requiring school safety and security coordinators to consider the implementation of silent panic alarms rather than mandating them outright. This approach recognizes that each school community faces unique challenges and capacities but also pushes local school entities to consider a comprehensive analysis of their safety posture, rather than ignoring this important tool.

However, PSEA believes there is **an important opportunity for improvement: The bill should require that the school safety and security coordinator consult with school employees when considering the implementation of silent panic alarms.**

Planning and partnership are essential to ensuring safe schools. The educators and support staff who work with students every day have firsthand insight into what procedures and technologies are most needed and most effective, where and how such strategies are best deployed, and what unintended consequences may arise. Gaining input and buy-in from school employees would help ensure that panic alarm systems are not only functional but also operationally realistic in each school setting.

Across the Commonwealth and the nation, schools have implemented a variety of panic-alarm technologies — wired or wireless buttons, wearable devices, mobile apps, or computer-based systems. Thoughtful consultation with school employees can help determine how such systems might work best locally and identify potential



issues, such as intentional or unintentional misuse that could disrupt the learning environment or become an undue burden on local law enforcement.

**If House Bill 634 is amended to include a provision requiring consultation with school employees, PSEA would be eager to support the legislation.**

Finally, although the bill does not provide a dedicated funding stream for panic alarm installation, maintenance, training, etc., PSEA is grateful that the General Assembly has consistently appropriated grant funding to assist local schools in making school facilities more secure and promoting positive school climates and behavioral health. However, the fact remains that many under-resourced districts will still struggle to adopt such systems. PSEA urges lawmakers to remember that continued investment in adequacy funding and school safety grants is essential to ensure equitable access for all public school entities and avoid creating safety disparities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and for your ongoing commitment to ensuring safe and secure school environments for Pennsylvania's students and school employees.

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