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On Behalf Of: 97703
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB3101

When we send our children to school we hope and must believe that they are receiving an education that will prepare them well for the rest of their lives. But even more importantly, we should believe that we are sending them to a safe and secure environment where they can learn, live, and grow. How very tragic is it that we are, in reality, sending them to the opposite. School shootings are the most palpable of these emergencies in the US today. There were 51 school shootings with injuries or deaths in 2022. The U.S. has had 2,032 school shootings since 1970 and these numbers are increasing. Since the historic attack at Columbine High School in 1999, nearly 300,000 students have been on campus during a school shooting and we must realize that this trauma extends in huge and growing circles. As the National Education Association says “Students should not have to endure drills on how to hide from mass murderers. Educators should not be forced to act as shields against assault weapons and make impossible choices about how to protect students from the worst horrors imaginable”.

In response to horrific mass shootings in schools that are increasing in frequency, some school districts are choosing to implement expensive jail-like systems of security. Do we really want to send our children with a kiss or, for a touch-me-not teenager, a “have a good day” to a jail environment? There are other options. The first is directly addressing gun violence in our country, a topic for other legislation. But once the child is on school property, surely we can agree that it is critical that educators have a fast, reliable and secure communication to emergency providers at all times. First responders need to share real-time updates and coordinate strategies or it is absolutely predictable that lives are lost or put at terrible risk. We know this from awful experience. HB 3101 addresses this critical need for a mobile-based silent panic alarm in our schools. This approach is more cost effective than hardwiring stationary panic buttons, more accessible and can be custom tailored to the school’s needs.

Gun violence is very graphic and a reality in this country but other emergencies are more common. Schools around the country that utilize the system found that 80% of alerts have been utilized for students having allergic reactions, seizures and heart issues. Through the mobile based app, the teacher or school staff can immediately connect to Emergency Medical Services.

Funding good education is always a challenge. But good education cannot happen in an atmosphere of fear and very real danger. We strongly encourage that you vote

to implement this safety measure with funding and resources so that your child or grandchild or family member is protected.