

House Bill 416: Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements: Please OPPOSE this bill as written!!

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and all other esteemed Committee Members:

I encourage all of you to OPPOSE this bill as it is written at this time. I think this bill needs to be re-written.

There are a few very disturbing phrases or clauses in this bill!!

One is on page 6, line 5 “(4) Notify parents AFTER a drill or training has taken place...” I understand that the parents are notified with “the annual schedule of active shooter safety drills or trainings at the beginning of the school year...” However, parents are really busy in today’s world. I think it should be written into the bill that “reminders will be sent out to the parents a day or two before the actual drill or training”. That gives parents a chance to remind their children that this drill or training is coming up and have any discussions with their children as the parents see fit. Maybe the parent knows that their child has some specific issues that will need to be addressed, such as hearing loud and sudden noises, or anxiety in general. The parents DESERVE the time to prepare their children for these drills or trainings, much like we parents prepare our children for any event that will happen in their lives.

Another: on page 6, beginning at line 7, “(5) Provide a Mental Health follow-up for students...after the drill or training...” Did you ask for the parents’ permission to have their children submit to a Mental Health follow-up? This is very important!! These drills or trainings could potentially be very traumatic or stressful for a variety of students, for whatever reason it would be traumatic for them. This is something that should be handled very carefully and should ALWAYS be based on parental consent!!

Another: on page 6, beginning at line 9, “(6) (I) Identify STUDENTS...who may require additional support during and after a drill or training, including an individual: 1. With a DISABILITY; or 2. Who has experienced trauma...” Now, you’re going to hand-pick students that the school thinks may need “additional support”? How is that legal? That seems very much like discrimination to me!! You are targeting certain students based on confidential information about those students!! Are you going to contact those students’ parents and have a discussion with them about WHY you have targeted their particular child and deemed that their child may need “additional support”? Have you gotten parental consent for this “additional support”?

Another: on page 6, beginning at line 14, “(II) Provide additional resources and COPING STRATEGIES for individuals who require additional support during and after a drill or training...” Whose strategies would you be using? What strategies would be used? Again, did you obtain parental consent for these resources and “coping strategies” to be used on these children? Also, if the student has special needs, have you consulted with the parents to determine if these are the best resources and coping strategies to use? Many times, special needs children are under the care of various doctors, therapists, mental health professionals, etc. for treatment for their particular challenges. Were the child’s other professionals consulted to determine the BEST resources and coping strategies that these medical and mental health professionals have used with a particular child successfully? If particular resources and coping strategies have been used successfully by a child’s other medical and mental health professionals, maybe those particular parents would want these same resources and coping strategies to be used CONSISTENTLY with their child!!

Another: on page 6, beginning at line 17, “(7) (I) COLLECT DATA on the effectiveness and PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT of the drills and trainings...” Again, have the parents been consulted about how their child will be assessed for “psychological impact”. Are the children going to undergo a psychological evaluation? And, if so, was parental consent obtained for that PSYCHOLOGICAL evaluation?

Another: on page 6, beginning at line 21, (G) (1) (I) On or before July 1, 2025, the Center shall develop model content that informs parents of the state’s firearm storage laws...” Where is the information coming from for the State’s firearm storage laws? Is it coming straight from the Maryland statute? Is it coming from a firearm professional that can make sure parents understand, especially if they don’t own a firearm. When a person applies to buy a firearm, they have to go through firearm training. Does this training include firearm storage now? If so, is the “model content” going to match what is being taught through a Maryland approved firearm safety course?

As you can tell, I have several concerns with this bill as it is written at this time. I do not have a problem necessarily with having this training in schools as a concept. I agree that the subject of active shooter drills is important in today’s world. I simply feel that there are too many issues with the way this bill is written as it stands now. I have friends who are very responsible firearm owners, and we have talked about the very issues I have brought up. They agree that the way this bill is written is too vague and needs more work.

I think this bill should be re-drafted AFTER having consulted worked with firearm safety instructors, police academy firearm instructors, and independent child psychiatrists that

could contribute to what would be age-appropriate, and then having the bill re-written with more specifics in the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration in OPPOSING this bill as it is written now or WITHDRAWING this bill, due to the issues I mentioned above.

Trudy Tibbals

A Very Concerned Mother and Maryland resident