



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Testimony in Support of House Bill 416
Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements
Ways and Means
February 7, 2024
1:00pm

The Baltimore Teachers Union supports House Bill 416, which would require the Maryland Center for School Safety to collaborate with an institution of higher education or a designated federal or national research entity to study the effectiveness and impact of active shooter safety drills or training by researching and analyzing data collected by local school systems. Additionally, the bill requires MCSS to identify best practices for active shooter safety drills or training on or before October 1, 2024, as well as requiring local school systems to provide parents with the annual schedule of active shooter safety drills.

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents 8,280 teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, clinicians, librarians, secretaries, community school site specialists, bus transportation aides, and many more school-based and central office support staff. We are 4 out of 5 workers in Baltimore City Public Schools, serving 75,595 students and their families. Our national union, the American Federation of Teachers, has over 1.7 million members in the United States and its territories. We believe that the safety and well-being of our students and educators are paramount, and we believe that a thoughtful examination of current practices is necessary to ensure that our approach to emergency preparedness is both effective and considerate of the developmental needs of our students.

We recognize that it is critically important to create safe and secure learning environments for students, families, and communities, and that school violence can destroy a school community's sense of safety. However, challenges posed by the current threat landscape make it important to assess the effectiveness of safety measures. We need evidence-based practices in developing and implementing emergency preparedness measures and research that guides the decision-making process and ensures that drills are not only effective but also developmentally appropriate for students.

Current practices raise concerns about the potential psychological impact of active shooter drills on students, including anxiety and stress. Feedback from parents and educators consistently reveals the need for a nuanced and age-appropriate approach to emergency preparedness. While images of school shootings in the media may encourage us towards quick solutions, we instead need research that values the input of educators, mental health professionals and experts in emergency preparedness. **It is for these reasons that the BTU supports House Bill 416 and urges a favorable report.**



Telephone: (410) 358-6600 Fax: (410) 358-2894 Website: www.baltimoreteachers.org