

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the Maryland Senate
Education, Energy and Environment Committee For the Hearing on
Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements - House Bill 515
April 4, 2023
SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 50,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. ***House Bill 515, Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings – Requirements - aligns with Free State PTA's legislative agenda which states the schools must provide a safe environment where all students, teachers and staff can thrive.***

House Bill 515 builds upon established legislation by requiring collaboration with an institution of higher education or a designated research entity to study the effectiveness and impact of active shooter safety drills or training. Also, it requires that at the beginning of the school year, local school systems inform parents of the schedule for active shooter drills.

An excellent component of House Bill 515 is the emphasis it has on communication and collaboration between school staff, students, and parents regarding notification to parents and students about measures the local school system is taking to provide sufficient notifications and information to parents and guardians in advance of walk-through lockdown drills as well as notification after the drills or trainings have occurred. Furthermore, this bill is consistent with the PTA's support of conducting regular and timely communication with families about safety policies and procedures. This is evident in the bill's requirement that communication on drills must include the type of drill (walkthrough, full-scale drill, etc.) and how students will be notified of a drill. Prior to any drill or training, parents must be provided with information to help their students cope with, communicate about, and understand the drill.

The Free State PTA supports the inclusion of safety education in curriculum and community programs. This bill is in sync with appropriate needed preparedness for students to address their own safety should an active shooter become present. In fact, this bill stipulates that they must be announced in advance to school personnel and students, clearly identifying that no threat is present and that they must not include live action simulations that mimic an actual incident or simulate a shooter or gun fire. Moreover, the policies surrounding the drills are required to be created with age- and developmentally appropriate content.

Free State PTA agrees that the effectiveness of active shooter bills should be studied, that students should have access to a mental health follow-up after active shooter bills, and that best practices should be followed carefully. This is in accordance with trauma-informed practices. **Therefore, the Free State PTA urges the passage of HB515.**

Sincerely,
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The mission of PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by
engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Page 1