

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 515
Public Schools – Active Shooter Safety Drills - Requirements**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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The Maryland State Education Association strongly supports House Bill 515, which would authorize the State Department of Education to adopt regulations to incorporate active shooter safety drills or trainings in the annual schedule of drills for local school systems, require local school systems to collect data regarding active shooter safety drills or trainings for the purpose of identifying best practices for active shooter safety drills, and provide notice to parents, students, and school personnel.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Every child deserves to feel safe when they go to school. But many students today carry the heavy awareness that gun violence is far too common: since 2020, firearms are the leading cause of death for children in the U.S.¹ This is unacceptable, and we must do more to keep students safe both in and out of school.

Though ninety-five percent of public schools in the U.S. report using drill procedures for lockdowns, research has not conclusively affirmed the value of these drills in

¹ Preventing Gun Violence, the Leading Cause of Childhood Death. National Institutes of Health (2022). https://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/od/directors_corner/prev_updates/gun-violence-July2022.



terms of prevention or protection.² According to the National Association for School Psychologists, unannounced, overly realistic active shooter drills risk creating trauma and anxiety than preparedness.³ This legislation seeks to prevent such effects by ensuring that drills are announced in advance and banning the use of live exercises or loud sounds intended to mimic gunfire. As amended, it also permits the use of training in place of drills.

It is important for communities, schools, and policymakers to evaluate the efficacy of active shooter drills balanced against the anxiety and mental health effects that students and educators may incur. By outlining common-sense guardrails and requiring further research into best practices, House Bill 515 establishes a solid foundation to evaluate and address these risks.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 515.

² The Impact of Active Shooter Drills in Schools: Time to rethink reactive school safety strategies. Everytown for Gun Safety (2020). https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-active-shooter-drills-in-schools/?_gl=1*14llmou*_ga*ODkyNjY3NzM1LjE2NzYxNDE1OTk.*_ga_LT0FWV3EK3*MTY3NjE0NzMzOC4zLjAuMTY3NjE0NzMzOC4wLjAuMA.

³ Best Practice Considerations for Armed Assailant Drills in Schools. National Association of School Psychologists (2021). <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/systems-level-prevention/best-practice-considerations-for-armed-assailant-drills-in-schools>.