

**Testimony in Support of
SB 432 - Public Schools -**

Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair and Members of the Education, Energy
And Environment Committee

FROM: Aspen Egan, Oxon Hill High School

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I am a junior at Oxon Hill High School, I live in Prince George's County Maryland. I am asking you to support **SB 432 - Public Schools - Active Shooter Safety Drills or Trainings - Requirements**. I am concerned, because I feel like our current Active Shooter Protocols are ineffective.

For those of you who've never experienced an active shooter drill, in my experience, a typical drill goes as follows: First, we receive word that the school will be going on lockdown, typically over the announcements. Sometimes they announce whether or not it's a drill, but often our only indicator is the reactions of the teachers. Next, the teacher locks the doors to the classroom, puts a piece of paper over the window on the door, and closes the blinds. Finally, we all either hide in the corner of the room, or simply shut our laptops and sit at our desks. Then we wait. Most drills only last for about five minutes, to avoid taking too much time out of the school day, but I've had some that have gone for around 10 and at most 20, though they were typically towards the end of the day and simply lasted until dismissal. At the end of the drill, they'll announce that the drill is over and we continue with our day.

In the name of transparency, I'll admit that I'm not entirely sure that I agree with the trauma aspect of the bill. I think that these drills are entirely necessary and that some trauma may just be worth it. While nobody *likes* to admit it's a choice we need to make, active shooters are a major problem in this country and I'd much sooner choose to undergo ten minutes of trauma, than to be gunned down in a hallway. However, I do *support* the bill, because I believe that the drills, and the protocols for a real threat, need to be re-evaluated.

I've been in lockdown drills and real lockdowns since I started school in kindergarten. Throughout all of these drills and lockdowns, I've always thought one thing: "If this was serious, we'd be dead." I've never been in a lockdown where a shooter has made it into the school and, I worry, that that's the only reason I can be here today. All the real lockdowns I've experienced have been the result of crime in the area. I'm not alive because the protocols worked, I'm alive because the shooter didn't *want* to kill me.

We are literally playing rock, paper, scissors with our lives and putting up paper. If someone had made it into the school with the intention of killing children, do you think a piece of paper is going to stop them? What does cowering in the corner achieve, besides making it easier to target us all at once? In each and every lockdown that we encounter, we turn our students, the future of our society, into sitting ducks, waiting to be gunned down by someone who's probably spent years of their life being ignored and overlooked when they needed help.

People don't just wake up one day and decide to kill innocent children. By the time someone reaches that point, they're not going to stop and think: "Oh, the door to the classroom is locked on a Wednesday at 1:23 PM, clearly there are no kids here." They're not going to go home and move on with their life. Any person with more than three brain cells can realize that a school probably isn't empty just because they can't see the kids. And if they make it in? I guess that's it. What are we going to do? We have no defense. And I think that's why a lot of kids I know don't take these drills seriously. People will talk during lockdown drills. I've had teachers *scream* at 5th graders during lockdown drills. I, personally, have been in at least two lockdowns where police were outside of our school for over an hour, and I sat there doing homework.

Unfortunately, when we get to the point in which our actions may signal to a shooter that someone is there, that there are victims waiting to be slaughtered, we're already doomed. If someone is close enough to hear our whispers, our typing, or even screaming, there's nothing anybody can do besides sit there and pray. Whether we live or die isn't dictated by anything we could possibly do. Our continued existence—the existence of myself, my little brother, my genius friend, my emo friend, the person I sit next to in biology whose name I don't know—our lives are now dictated by the shooter's ability to aim. And all we can do is sit there and take it.

Maybe we could pray, but I'm an atheist, the best I've got is to pray to science that this guy loaded his gun wrong. So yeah, I'm going to do my homework. Yeah, I'm going to talk to my friends. Because what's the point in not doing so? If I make it out, then I don't have to do the homework. And if the shooter hears me, I'm dead no matter what, so I might as well die with no history work to carry to the other side. I'm sure it'd be a pain to figure out how to turn it in anyway, and I don't need my grades going down just because of a pesky gunshot wound.

I don't entirely know what the best protocols would be.

I can't guarantee that there is a better protocol.

But I do support researching the most effective methods to ensure that I make it out alive.

This isn't some protocol to determine who wins a tie.

This can't be done halfway.

Children's lives are at stake.

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