



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill 1167 - Maryland Center for School Safety –
Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program – Established
Ways and Means Committee, February 21, 2024
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2024 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC strongly supports HB 1167, which aims to improve the safety and security of public schools in the State by implementing an emergency notification system in each public school in the State on or before September 1, 2026, and requiring the Governor to include in the annual budget bill for fiscal year 2026 an appropriation of \$4,500,000 for the Program.

The safety of our school age children is a community responsibility. As we have witnessed in previous mass school shootings such as Sandy Hook Elementary and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the impact of these tragic events affects the entire community's well-being. The events of 9/11 and the DC area sniper attacks the following year in 2002 caused a situation in classrooms across Maryland where many decisions had to be made quickly to be sure there was a sense of calm. Teachers and administrators did not have access to a panic button to alert first responders without disturbing students. .

During the sniper attacks, which lasted 3 weeks, schools were locked down, but teaching and learning continued. Firsthand accounts from the staff revealed that they were scared, nervous and uncomfortable and felt a huge sense of responsibility for every student's safety and well-being. Having that panic button would have been a way to get word to those outside of the classroom or outside of the building, quickly and silently, should they have needed help to arrive as quickly as possible. Access to a panic button may be the best tool a teacher can have when an emergency situation occurs, and they need to get the word out fast.

Now is the time for Maryland to make this critical investment in our children and communities. Schools should be our safe place; a place to learn with the tools available to be sure learning can continue. This one tool, the panic button, will add that additional layer that is needed to ensure a happy, safe learning environment, protecting the peace of mind of parents, teachers, and students alike.

We ask for your support for HB 1167 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Tazeen Ahmad
WDC President

Lisa Fuller
WDC Children & Youth
Subcommittee

Melissa Bender
Co-Chair, WDC Advocacy