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Environment and Transportation
Committee

The Maryland House of
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Committee: Ways and Means
Testimony: HB 1167 Statewide Secure Schools Emergency Response Program
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 21, 2024

Madam Chair, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee, thank you for your consideration of House Bill 1167, which is an important bill to increase the safety of our schools.

Last session, Senator Waldstreicher introduced a similar bill in the Senate. We spent the interim meeting with key stakeholders to address the concerns that were presented in the bill hearing last year and understand ways we could improve this legislation.

Specifically, the Center for School Safety expressed concerns with the implementation timeline and that some local jurisdictions have already invested resources into a similar solution to what this program creates. We listened to those concerns and this year we extended the implementation timeline of the bill and allowed for an opt out option for local jurisdictions who have been deemed to have a similar program.

Gun violence is an epidemic, which largely impacts our schools. This session, there are many pieces of legislation in this policy space as we continue to consider ways to confront this problem, and I believe it is better to have more tools in the toolbox, not less.

During an emergency event in a school, every second counts and the bill before you can save precious seconds. With the implementation of a statewide emergency response program, this will guarantee that every student receives the same protection no matter which jurisdiction they live in. This will allow designated school personnel to quickly alert appropriate first responders of an emergency at school and, alternatively, emergency personnel to quickly alert school personnel of an emergency within a certain distance from the school. Programs like this have been proven to save lives at schools and will be another important tool in Maryland for the safety of our students.

For these reasons I urge a favorable report on HB 1167.