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SHERIFF MAXWELL C. UY

February 15, 2024

VIA E-MAIL: linda.foley@house.state.md.us

Honorable Linda Foley
222 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: HB 1167 – Maryland Center for School Safety – Statewide Secure Schools
Emergency Response Program -- Established**

Dear Delegate Foley:

This letter confirms my stated support for enactment of HB 1167. As you know, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is actively involved in promoting school safety and staffs a Community Engagement Officer (CEO) at Magruder High School and an associated school cluster. In our view, the proposed legislation would provide an essential foundation for developing a uniform program of safety plans for Maryland public schools to organize and coordinate notifications to law enforcement during an emergency.

We see a variety of tangible benefits from this legislation. First, the establishment of a model communication platform will ensure that a broad-based "laboratory" will exist to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the program within schools and thereby accelerate the adoption of improvements in the program over time. Second, a dedicated notification program for first responders provides the simplest and quickest method for alerting law enforcement, 911 dispatchers and other first responders with a single press of a button. The benefits of these enhancements – including the requirement of a cellular phone application based panic button event system – ensure that all on-site personnel have the notification system at their fingertips at all times. Such benefits serve to reduce response time and ensure that notification alerts can be made to first responders discreetly that would potentially provide law enforcement with the element of surprise. Further, the availability of a universal application for on-site personnel to notify first responders will undoubtedly bring an enhanced sense of empowerment and security to those personnel in these unsettling times.

The MCSO has many years of experience with a "panic button" notification system as an effective tool in providing security for our courthouse personnel. Simply stated, such systems work. In sum, the MCSO fully supports this legislative effort to establish a model notification system within our schools. Thank you for your efforts and consideration.

Sincerely,

Maxwell C. Uy
Sheriff