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JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 26, 2018

The Honorable Brad Schimel  
Wisconsin Department of Justice  
P.O. Box 7857  
Madison, WI 53707-7857

Dear Attorney General Schimel,

As you are aware, the School Safety Package signed into law by Governor Walker this morning entrusts you and your team at the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with the extremely important task of guiding and overseeing of school safety planning and training in our state.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is prepared to offer our assistance as you develop the plan for awarding grants and determine what expenditures will be eligible for the school safety grant program. As you may be aware, the WASB met with the governor's office and with key legislative offices as the School Safety Package was being developed. On behalf of the 422 locally elected public school boards we represent, we want to share with you the same advice we offered those policy makers in hopes that it may guide your decisions to better serve school districts in our state.

The WASB emphasized that any plan for awarding these grants needed to be flexible enough to allow local districts to use the resources provided for the safety measures or steps each district has identified as its greatest safety needs. The WASB also emphasized that funding devoted to only "hardening" school facilities, while welcome, was not likely to be sufficient to address the full range of locally identified needs. Ideally, these grants should be eligible to fund an array of school safety-related expenditures including the following:

- 1. Prevention and Intervention Measures** such as the provision of school-based mental health screening and counseling services; trauma informed care services; state resources and assistance to enable local districts to provide educational services for pupils that have been expelled, particularly non-special-education pupils who would otherwise be cut loose from contact with the educational system, which is a particular problem for small and rural school districts that may lead to alienation and resentment on the part of expelled students; anti-bullying (prevention and awareness) education, violence prevention curricula, and character education; and conflict resolution and dispute management strategy training.

2. **Collaborative Measures** to ensure that efforts to make schools secure are not undertaken in a silo but are coordinated with law enforcement, mental health professionals and county social services personnel—such as providing schools with technical assistance and training to address emergency preparedness and school violence; encouraging mental health providers to work with law enforcement and schools to develop uniform threat assessment tools to identify potential shooters and then to figure out how to treat potential shooters and/or limit their access to people and weapons and providing resources to train school personnel in the use of threat assessment techniques; developing tip lines or hotlines or other ways for students and parents to report disturbing or threatening behavior. We note that community-based approaches can continue after age 21 and offer options for those times (such as summer or other holiday breaks) when school is not in session.
  
3. **Measures to Secure School Facilities** such as better controlling access and implementing better visitor management systems (student, staff and visitor identification systems); ensuring schools have adequate and functioning school safety equipment (video surveillance systems, sensors, cell phone apps or two-way radios, distress/alarm buzzers, hotlines, designated contact persons); providing resources for schools to make proper brick and mortar improvements (secured entrances, secure architectural designs, interior door locks, emergency exits, metal detectors); and adequate compensation for armed school security officers who, consistent with WASB resolutions, are current law enforcement officers (SROs) or retired law enforcement officers who have maintained their training.

We are ready and eager to assist the DOJ and the Office of School Safety in whatever way possible to get the word out to school districts about the steps they must take under the new law and the deadlines by which they must act. We also stand ready to help the DOJ inform school districts regarding grant eligibility and application procedures as information becomes available. We hope you will look to us as a partner in this effort.

Finally, while we believe the School Safety Package signed into law today will be an overwhelmingly positive step toward ensuring the safety of our students and staff and reassuring parents and communities, we are concerned that not all school districts will have the same access to high quality up-to-date advice on school safety and security measures as they develop their school safety plans and grant applications. We believe that schools across the state would benefit from a certification system that would help ensure schools receive advice that reflects best practices and best thinking. We have suggested that, along with the DOJ, perhaps the Wisconsin Technical College System with campuses and faculty across the state could help train or certify persons with technical expertise in school safety and security. We ask that you take this into consideration.

We hope you will look upon the WASB as a resource. We look forward to assisting you in every way possible to improve the safety and security of Wisconsin schools and safeguarding our students and educators.

Sincerely,



John H. Ashley  
Executive Director

Wisconsin Association of School Boards