

Proposal: School Safety 360 Pilot

Proposed Measure in Response to Senate Bill 213

Presented by Heidi Ganahl, Founder, Moms Fight Back



INTRODUCTION

Moms Fight Back seeks the opportunity to create a pilot program for measuring and evaluating a comprehensive, best-practices based approach to school safety that could be standardized and made available to all schools once complete.



Our vision for school safety

Moms Fight Back views our nation's schools as the most significant factor in the health, happiness, well-being, and success of America's future generations. As a result, we strongly believe that:

*Every American school should serve as an absolute safe haven for our nation's youth, offering **reliable, safe, and empowering** experiences and resources for healthy growth and development.*

The Challenge in Front of Us

America Has Never Spent as Much on School Safety as We Are Now

While most Americans likely don't realize the true nature and reality of the dangers our youth face, school safety has quickly become one of our nation's top priorities. According to Bloomberg, *over the last few years spending on school safety has increased by a staggering 81%, with total annual American spending on school safety resources projected to reach \$5 Billion per year by 2017.*

School Homicides and Active Shooter Incidents Have Increased Dramatically

Despite America's increased spending on school safety resources, homicide rates and active shooter incidents have increased dramatically. For the last several decades, the Center for Disease Control consistently found that only about 1% of youth homicides occurred at school. Over the last few years, however, *school homicides have increased by 45% and the average annual number of active shooter incidents has increased by 156%.*

Youth Victimization and Violence Now Occurs Most Often at School

While homicides and active shooter situations especially capture most of the American public's attention, their likelihood is still very rare. For example, even with their dramatic rise in recent years, students still only face a 1 in 2.5 million chance of becoming the victim of an active shooter.

Comparatively, over 1.4 million students faced some sort of victimization on school grounds in 2013. In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) ***young people in America are 58% more likely to face victimization and 85% more likely to face violent victimization while at school than anywhere else.***

For the first time in our nation's history, America's schools have become the most likely place to encounter youth victimization and violence.

Many American Youth Do Not Report Bullying and Victimization

According to the NCES, **less than 50% of the 7.4 million US youth who reported experiencing cyber bullying in 2013 reported the experience to their parents.** Moreover, 3.6 million students report that they did not go to school for one or more days in the past month as a result of feeling unsafe. In many of these situations, students fail to report the situation or their feelings to an adult.

American Youth Experience More Stress than Adults

According to the American Psychology Association (APA),

- Teen stress rates are 13% higher than adults
- 31% of teens report feeling overwhelmed
- 30% of teens report feeling depressed
- 33% of teens report feeling chronically fatigued or tired
- 25% of teens skipped one or more meals in the last month due to stress.

These statistics seem to indicate that our nation's current educational environments drive higher stress rates with few resources and programs to support effective stress education and management capabilities.

America's current approach to school safety is making the situation worse.

With more resources, money, and attention than ever before, America's focus on school safety should cause the situation to improve. Instead, we're not only failing to make the situation better, but current efforts appear to be making the situation worse as statistics around violence increase, teen suicide is increasing and students are feeling increased depression, anxiety and fear at school.

It's time to figure out a better standard for school safety, with which all schools can easily and affordably comply.

Fast Facts on Current School Safety

- *American youth are **58% more likely to face victimization** at school and **85% more likely to face violence** at school*
- ***At-School Homicides have increased by 45%** in the last few years*
- ***Average, annual Active Shooter incidents have increased by 156%** in the US since 2007*
- ***US spending on school safety has increased by 81%** in the last few years*

Proposed Measure: School Safety Profile

As the founder of a \$100 million brand, Mom's Fight Back founder, Heidi Ganahl, knows that the success of any business, organization, or initiative relies on constant measurement of past and present conditions.

Effective, efficient, and ongoing measurement allows for establishment of predictable baselines and standards against which deviations can be compared. Strong data collection and review also allows for the evaluation of best practices and the best approach for integrating those practices into standard operations when it makes sense to do so.

The United States provides plenty of examples of how effective, efficient, and ongoing measurements help achieve safety. For example, prior to takeoff, every pilot completes a pre-flight checklist to ensure his or her plane and the passengers it carries have the highest probability of reaching their destination. While every good pilot has strong intuitions, would you rather fly with a pilot who completes a pre-flight inspection based on feelings and emotions or a pilot who completes a pre-flight inspection based on a pre-approved, data-driven checklist of inspection points? Nearly everyone would agree that a pre-approved checklist makes passengers much safer.

American businesses serve as another example, collecting metrics for measuring organizational and even individual compliance with everything from operational strategies to financial obligations and market indicators to legal requirements. Finally, American hospitals and healthcare systems spend billions of dollars every year tracking compliance with federal and state regulations, industry best practices, and emerging health trends, all in the name of keeping patients safe and healthy.

As the Governor's Committee on School Safety works towards defining a "standard of care" for school safety, the same principles of empirical measurement must apply.

Fortunately, most schools already complete significant empirical measurement around their own safety profiles when applying for and negotiating school liability insurance coverage. In fact, the insurance industry already uses a "checklist" of what they believe makes a school "safe".

In conjunction with this type of existing effort, any comprehensive approach to school safety must also take into consideration the broad spectrum of different parties involved in keeping America's youth safe at school, including the Department of Homeland Security, school boards, Colorado's School Safety Resource Center, the FBI, local law enforcement, mental health professionals and more, many of which have "checklists" as well.



To achieve such an approach, Moms Fight Back, a Colorado non-profit, has partnered with a team of highly respected security and safety experts, including retired Lt. Col. Woody Boyd, one of the foremost antiterrorism and industrial/physical security experts in the world, to create a Pilot program.

Now a Colorado resident, Lt. Col. Boyd spent 27 years as a leader in the Air Force keeping some of our nation's most sensitive assets safe around the world. Following his passion to empower safer and healthier global communities, Boyd and his team are dedicated to offering effective, efficient, and affordable global security best practices to communities, churches, private companies and now schools by helping Moms Fight Back on this innovative initiative.

The unique approach they take to addressing violence emanates from strategies and tactics deployed by our nation's most trusted security assets to significantly reduce violence and create positive, collaborative environments of safety across our military's footprint - from bases in Americans' backyards to some of the most high-risk conflict zones across the planet.

Through this partnership, Mom's Fight Back and Lt. Col. Boyd have gathered hundreds of documents related to school safety, reviewed global security best practices, and interviewed various experts. We have compiled all applicable and available assessment forms and checklists, prioritized the items and split them into practices that we believe will help establish safer schools while also providing baseline safety requirements for the formulation of a "School Safety Profile" assessment tool and checklist.

Bearing in mind that the School Safety Profile must serve as a critical tool in making schools safer, testing and validation of the form should take place to verify its effectiveness, and we will create a system to certify professionals in the administration of the School Safety Profile assessment.

The School Safety Profile alone will not make schools safer, so Moms Fight Back has included in the pilot the creation of a gap training program designed to help schools address any gaps uncovered by the assessment.

Phase I of Proposed Implementation

1. Moms Fight Back will partner with the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), a research program of the Institute of Behavioral Science (IBS) at the University of Colorado, Boulder, to assist with the measurement science and automation behind the “School Safety Profile” assessment tool and gap training.

A good vulnerability assessment sets the tone for building any successful safety program. Moms Fight Back has built a comprehensive School Safety Profile assessment that pulls from a number of nationally recognized resources, such as the Colorado School Safety Resource Center, DHS and FBI checklists.

The assessment tool will include a comprehensive and weighted evaluation of each school’s available resources, culture, incident metrics, and alignment with recommended approaches to school safety. Final scoring will create a comprehensive School Safety Profile, including indicators for “Gap Training” - appropriate retraining and best practices to address gaps in the school’s current approach to ensuring safety.

2. MFB will develop an accreditation board consisting of relevant subject matter experts. The accreditation board would be responsible for prescribing standards set forth in the School Safety Profile, establishing protocols for the School Safety 360 gap training in accordance with the School Safety Profile, and develop guidelines for ongoing training and continuing education requirements.

The accreditation board would also exist to support smaller, or rural, districts which need specialized assistance, and to deal with schools that are not performing well against the School Safety Profile assessment.

This board would include expertise from the worlds of education, technology, public safety, military, homeland security, and emergency services, but it would exist as a standalone non-governmental entity to maintain a laser focused approach to the job at hand – keeping our children safe as the nation’s leading state for school safety.

3. Over 12 months, our MFB school safety team of professionals will assess (on-site) 25 selected Colorado schools of various sizes, locations and demographics in the state using the “School Safety Profile” proposed in this document to create a “State of School Safety” report based on the assessment findings. If necessary, assessment data can be aggregated to avoid “naming” schools to avoid hesitancy of schools/districts to participate, and would include climate surveys of parents, staff and law enforcement as well.

Phase II of Proposed Implementation (Gap Training):

Once We Find Gaps, Let’s Get to Work and Address Them

Once a school’s baseline safety profile has been established, the fastest way to address any critical gaps comes through quality training and empowerment of a variety of school personnel. Moms Fight Back’s School Safety 360 Program incorporates proactive prevention measures with highly reliable, scalable response capabilities for managing and containing potential safety issues. While most current school safety programs emphasize physical security and infrastructure heavy approaches to protection, Moms Fight Back takes this approach further as the data shows ***the best return on investment of our precious resources does not lie in infrastructure, it lies in people.***

According to The Peace Alliance - a D.C. based non-profit focused on fostering and encouraging civic engagement towards peace - **on average, early prevention measures are 60 times more cost effective than intervention measures.** What’s more, educating youth on basic life skills can yield up to a 42% reduction in in physical and verbal violence.



As a result of these statistics, Moms Fight Back has reviewed hundreds of existing documents around school safety, best practices from all over the nation, and collaborated with some of our nation's top antiterrorism, force protection, and industrial/physical security experts to focus heavily on what works best.

We've found that in the most high-risk locations across the globe, and in our nation's own back yard, a "people-centric," layered, and proactive approach works best incorporating:

- Students
- Parents
- School Staff
- Law Enforcement
- School Resource Officers
- Neighbors/Community
- Nearby Businesses

Significant emphasis on prevention and personal accountability yields the highest results. For schools, this approach manifests in proactive, early, and assertive identification, investigation, and interdiction of potential safety threats. Also key is activating healthy and supportive resources to resolve issues as positively, supportively, and non-punitively as possible.

We also recognize that financial and human resources are **extremely scarce**, so we have created an approach that is cost effective and has a very high return on investment of our precious resources. **In fact, studies show that every \$1 spent on training in foundational life skills can yield up to \$50 in returns.**

Moreover, the cost to assess a school's ability to keep their students safe, while also implementing training, education and facility best practices to meet a baseline standard of care, is a fraction of what will be spent on increased insurance premiums, lawsuits and measures to simply meet liability requirements (that don't do anything to keep students and staff safe).

The end result of this process will be:

- **A statewide, research-based “State of School Safety” report.**
- **An effective, validated assessment process** - which could be executed at random, for evaluating compliance with recommended guidelines at schools across Colorado, once “standard of care” legislation becomes active.



- **An accredited approach (School Safety 360) for schools to meet or work towards the “standard of care”** necessary to earn safe harbor from potential liabilities through our Moms Fight Back “Moms Approve” blue ribbon seal of approval program.

In conclusion, our efforts towards reversing the trends of rising school violence rates have never been more critical than they are today. As violence towards children now happens more at school than anywhere else, the state of Colorado and American’s everywhere face a terrifying prospect: our nation’s schools have become one of the most dangerous, stressful, and destructive environments a parent can send their child.

Together, we have the capacity to drive positive change for our youth; set an example of collaborative perseverance and unshakeable persistence towards progress; and reclaim our educational ecosystems as wellsprings of intensive learning, lifelong empowerment, and holistic inspiration for happier, healthier, and safer future generations.