

**TEXAS HOUSE DISTRICT 60
SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY
INTERIM REPORT 2022**



**A REPORT TO THE
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON YOUTH SAFETY & SECURITY**

STATE REPRESENTATIVE GLENN ROGERS

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Texas House of Representatives

District 60

August 15, 2022

Dr. Glenn Rogers
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P.O. Box 2910
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The Honorable Dade Phelan
Speaker, Texas House of Representatives
The Honorable J.M. Lozano
Chairman, House Committee on Youth Safety and Security
Texas State Capitol, Rm. 2W.13
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, and Fellow Members,

Following the horrific tragedy at Uvalde, the push for school security will be at the forefront of our deliberations this Legislative Session. As a member who represents two rural counties and one rapidly growing suburban county, I believe my district serves as a unique cross section of Texas in the growing rural/urban divide in public education. Throughout the interim, I have met with both public and private schools to offer my recommendations for consideration by the Eighty-eighth Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn Rogers".

Rep. Glenn Rogers

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I. BACKGROUND

On May 24, 2022, an 18-year-old assailant breached the interior of the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, killing nineteen students, two teachers, and wounded seventeen more.ⁱ For 73 minutes after the initial incident, the attacker barricaded himself inside until he was eventually neutralized by a law enforcement team.ⁱⁱ Following the tragedy, on June 1, 2022, Governor Greg Abbott called for the Texas Legislature to adopt special committees to examine school security and safety, as well as formally investigate what caused this horrific tragedy to continue with minimal resistance.

Two days later, on June 3, 2022, Speaker of the House Dade Phelan announced The Robb Elementary Shooting Investigative Committee to examine the tragedy as well as its inadequate response. Speaker Phelan further announced that the Select Committee on Youth Health and Safety and the House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee would work this interim to establish recommendations for educational security, mental health expansion, and criminal justice reform ahead of the 88th Legislative Session. Following Speaker Phelan's announcement, the State Representative for Texas House District 60, Dr. Glenn Rogers, received a plethora of communications from local officials, parents, and education professionals alike to offer recommendations, support, and information on what specific steps they wish the State of Texas to take to best promote a secure campus.

At the same time, per the enactment of HB 1 by the 87th Legislature in the 3rd Called Special Session, the state's legislative districts were redrawn to proportion Texas's political representation with the 2020 Census. As a result, Texas House District 60 (HD 60) will be compressed from eight counties in 2021 (Brown, Callahan, Coleman, Eastland, Hood, Palo Pinto, Stephens, and Shackelford) to three counties in 2023 (Palo Pinto, Parker, and Stephens). Outside of a geographic change, the demographics of the new territory have also changed significantly. The old eight counties of HD 60 were predominantly rural, while the new HD 60 has two rural counties (Palo Pinto and Stephens) alongside a rapidly growing and more suburban county (Parker). Dissecting even further, Parker County has split almost down the middle, with the western portion of the county less urbanized and more rural and the eastern portion (which borders Tarrant County) rapidly expanding into much larger communities.

Considering the unique circumstance of the moment, Representative Rogers and his team felt it prudent to take a proactive approach to school security and safety prior to the start of the 88th Legislative Session. While not officially on the lead committees, the unique divide in House District 60 provides an interesting opportunity to compare and contrast the needs of rural and suburban populations in the decision-making process during the upcoming legislative session. As a result, Representative Rogers has spent June-August in individual meetings with the public and private schools, as well as law enforcement representatives, in HD 60 to determine each community's strengths and opportunities for improvement. The aim of these meetings is to create a holistic picture of a diverse landscape of needs, as well as prevent a "one-size-fits-all" mandate from disproportionately disadvantaging ISDs on a statewide basis. The first half of the report is the common trendlines and talking points present across each ISD, as well as the state of security operations on the rural/urban divide. The second half is focused on legislative recommendations to better assist school districts' needs in the upcoming session.

II. BRICK AND MORTAR DEFENSES

When it comes to school security, brick and mortar defense systems are the primary expansion of security operations that comes to mind. For the purposes of the report, our office defines "brick and mortar" systems as including, but not limited to, secure vestibules, bullet-resistant film, singular points of entry, exterior classrooms, and retrofitted doors. For older campuses, upgrading these systems is incredibly cost-prohibitive. Predominantly in rural communities, schoolhouses were built in a time in which school security was not prioritized. In the case of one rural ISD, the high school was constructed in 1935. As a result, rural communities are generally left with one of two options: build a new school district or retrofit existing infrastructure.

Constructing a new primary, secondary, or administration building allows the ISD to design a model around school security in exchange for an initially significant financial and time investment. Building a new campus from scratch is a multimillion-dollar investment traditionally financed by the Texas Education Agency and bonds. While unpopular in the best of times, historic inflation and above-average fuel prices have hit the average Texan's pocketbook hard; thus,

attempting to authorize a bond at this current juncture would require an exceptional level of buy-in from the local tax base.

Retrofitting existing infrastructure can be done in a piecemeal approach but still comes at a high cost and a delay in immediate safety. Vestibules on older buildings are impractical to construct and can range drastically in cost, making them untenable to rural ISD budgets. 3M film is another hurdle for smaller ISDs, on top of purchasing the film, installation costs can be anywhere from \$5-\$8 per square foot of space. Moreover, secondary campuses, in House District 60, are more likely to employ portable classrooms to offset the growth or separate buildings for ag, athletics, and band. The constant passing periods in and out of the main building create a significant security risk and undermine the security that an extra vestibule or window film could provide. A proposed suggestion to counter this dilemma has been a proposed universal adoption of extensive perimeter fencing around the entire campus complex; once again, for many districts, such a proposal is a significant financial undertaking. A small, rural ISD stated that it could cost upwards of \$200,000 to fully implement perimeter fencing around all exterior buildings.

Doors continue to be a sore spot for many rural educators, as the locking mechanisms on older buildings need to be refitted to allow for doors to lock from the inside. During the time many of these entry points were installed, doors were expected to only lock from one direction. This was to prevent students from sequestering themselves inside a classroom to avoid detection with drugs, sex, or academic dishonesty. Tragedies in schools have proven that this method is outdated; however, advanced locking and door systems are not cheap. One different rural school in House District 60 reported spending nearly \$130,000 to upgrade its key-fob door system — a debilitating price for a necessary improvement; and not including the cost required to install the older fob system in the first place.

For larger, urbanized schools (or rural schools with an expanding tax base), many in the district were either built or renovated within the past five years. This modernized infrastructure allowed the architects to design the school with our current perceptions of security developments. These schools, on average, have universal exterior vestibules, bullet-resistant film on all windows, updated entry points district-wide, and a centralized building for all classrooms. In addition, larger schools receive proportionally more in funding from the school security allotment, as the formula apportions funding based on enrollment. This extra capital compensates for the larger student body

and allows for a larger working budget for the maintenance and operation of brick and mortar defenses.

Such advancements are also found in larger rural communities (specifically larger towns within a rural county) that have recently passed a bond. Schools whose main buildings were re-financed or constructed at least five years ago have additionally built security integrations. However, the evolving need for school security improvements leaves much to be desired alongside the high cost of annual upkeep.

III. TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

While standard brick and mortar deterrents are significantly cost prohibitive in rural districts as opposed to suburban regions (or areas that have recently built new facilities via bonds), a similar, but much less pronounced, gap in integration exists when it comes to the use of prevention and detection software. These systems allow for schools to implement visitor management, digital media monitoring, compliance drill scheduling, and early intervention detection to all campus buildings at a much less logistically prohibitive rate than traditional brick and mortar defenses. While these integrations do little to prevent an active assailant from breaching a building, their primary purpose serves to alert school administration to threatening or suspicious behavior ahead of time. Moreover, proper implementation of technological security additions can improve response and deployment time for law enforcement during an active threat situation by allowing police access to any necessary security information in real-time. Across public and private schools in House District 60, the two most common technological security systems in effect are Raptor Technologies and Navigate360.

Raptor Technologies is the primary school security system in effect in ISDs across House District 60. While the extent of integrations varies from district to district based on immediate needs and budget allocations, the Raptor program has found success in both rural and suburban campuses. However, for a large majority of fully integrated Raptor campuses, the full rollout of the equipment and systems will take effect this coming academic year. School districts of varying sizes have previously chosen to forgo or look outside for technological integration of security prior to the tragedy at Uvalde. As a result, there is a significantly increased adoption rate of the Raptor system. A fully integrated Raptor system includes StudentSafe™ Early Intervention Software,

Visitor Management System, Volunteer Management System, and Emergency Management System.

The StudentSafe™ Early Intervention Software allows ISDs to log and catalog "low-level" concerns about a student to track individuals who may be at risk or in need of help by an ISD's counseling professional. Raptor defines a low-level concern as "minor concerns a staff member may have about a student's behavior or observance of the student,"ⁱⁱⁱ such as "irregular attendance, outbursts or meltdowns, unexplained bruising, new slang, unkempt/disheveled, hungry, withdrawing, etc."^{iv} As concerns are uncovered, teachers or administrators may enter notes about a student into the software; afterward, designated staff can review these notes and determine whether intervention is necessary or if the student poses a threat to campus security. In larger campuses with a higher enrollment, StudentSafe™ allows intervention counselors and mental health professionals to keep track of students who showcase a need. Given the dynamics of rural communities, a more informal approach is often taken. In smaller schools, changes in a student's behavior can be more apparent to teachers and administration. Students who exhibit low-level concerns are then recommended to appropriate counseling or resources by word of mouth.

The Visitor and Volunteer Management Systems allow for ISDs to have a greater level of control over who enters and exits the campus during school hours. These systems are useful to prevent a potential non-student threat from entering the campus, as well as to keep an eye on attendance patterns of students throughout the year. These personnel systems scan a visitor or volunteer's driver's license or other identification and alert the school to any suspicious activity or record that could make an individual a danger to children.

According to Raptor, the two most common flags the system raises are if an adult is on the sex offender registry or has a court-ordered restriction on their access to their child.^v The personnel management systems also allow for students and faculty to sign in and out of the campus throughout the day. As a result, schools have a greater level of knowledge on staff activity as well as habitual late or non-attendance from students. Certainly, the screening requirements of the Raptor (or any other system) personnel management system will not stop an active assailant with intent on harm; however, their presence provides an added level of security on more silent threats to students by preventing potential sex criminals or threatening persons from moving past

traditional defenses undetected. Schools that have seen the use of the Raptor Visitor and Volunteer Management system in House District 60 have spoken favorably about the software.

Lastly, the Emergency Management Software from Raptor has received the greatest amount of use and discussion in conversations with school officials. The Emergency Management Software decentralizes an ISD's early response protocol, empowering teachers and administrators to react if they notice a risk to student safety. The Raptor systems function on any device, and any faculty can initiate a lockdown from their smartphone or desktop without waiting for approval from the administration office.

At the same time, lockdown and safety alerts transmit directly to all mobile devices, reducing the need for a centralized PA announcement. As a result, individual teachers can take greater control over the safety of their students should all parties follow the proper protocol. With the EMS software, the administration can also schedule all necessary fire, lockdown, and tornado drills for the upcoming school year and automatically fill out all reports mandated by the state. House District 60 schools that use the Raptor program show high levels of satisfaction with the ease and integration of the system in streamlining and enhancing campus security district-wide.

Navigate360 is a relatively rare program used by schools in House District 60 compared to the Raptor program; however, it provides a greater range of available tools for campus security. In total, there are 11 various components for schools to fully integrate into their school security program, and alongside an early intervention, visitor, volunteer, and emergency management system, there are additional apparatuses that Navigate360 districts were excited to share.

Interactive layouts provided by Navigate360 were viewed favorably by administrators and police departments alike. The system allows the school district to create floorplans of each campus, detailed with icons showing the location of emergency equipment, points of entry, and classroom layouts. Moreover, Navigate360 allows the police to click on the desired classroom and see a 360-degree view of the classroom as if they were standing in the middle of it. Similar to Google Earth, responding departments can rotate the camera to different viewing angles, providing a more detailed understanding of the facility interior to scale, as opposed to just a birds-eye floor plan view that neglects vital information, such as furniture placement, blind spots, and hiding locations.

Navigate360 also implements the Social Sentinel program integrated into its full management suite. Social Sentinel allows districts to monitor social media pages for potentially threatening comments or posts.^{vi} The program looks for specific keywords or phrases relating to bullying, suicide, violence, or self-harm, and reports those postings to administrators and trusted personnel. From there, the ISD can investigate to see if it constitutes a significant threat or if the post was benign in nature. Ethical concerns have been raised about the potential invasion of privacy that Social Sentinel offers; however, many in the various districts have stated that these apprehensions are not well founded. The program only scans public social media pages for those who are geotagged in the district; thus, the only activity that gets reported is what individuals choose to post publicly online.

Social Sentinel does have the ability to scan the content of online searches, search history, and emails to alert for threatening behavior; however, it can only do so on ISD-approved devices. Students who use school WiFi or a school assignment laptop can have their online habits logged for any suspicious activity. Nevertheless, students who use these devices do so with the understanding and consent that these are not personal use items and should only be used for school-related activities. Uniquely, while being owned and operated by Navigate360, Social Sentinel can function without any other systems operated by the parental company. As a result, many school districts that do not use Navigate360 employ Social Sentinel (or a similar social media monitoring program).

Nevertheless, as in line with the running theme found amongst our districts, the significant divide in technological integrations comes down to cost. While both Navigate360 and Raptor assess costs on a per school basis, discussions with local ISDs found that full integration of all systems can cost as much as \$35,000 annually. Fortunately, this is far less than what is required to install traditional brick and mortar defense structures, at the trade-off of doing less to directly prevent an active assailant. In a perfect world, it is ideal for all districts to have complete integration of an emergency suite due to the high upside they provide. Still, the annual operating costs will continue to be a sore spot for smaller districts and non-K-12 schools, in more rural areas, who are implementing these programs in a piecemeal approach.

IV. ON-SITE SECURITY PERSONNEL

The presence of on-site security personnel at primary, secondary, and alternative campuses is as vitally important as they are extremely depleting to an ISDs year-to-year budget. Unlike a technological or brick-and-mortar improvement, on-site security is a salaried position with some of the highest annual costs to school district budgets (if an ISD can afford one at all) within HD 60. On-site security personnel are, however, invaluable assets for safety and security. While the tragedy in Uvalde has shaken the confidence of many Texans in our school security personnel, when under proper leadership, protocol, and training, there is no question that they provide a front line of defense with the capability to neutralize a shooter or defend a classroom.

Each superintendent in House District 60 has professed a complete faith in their school security personnel who may serve in supplemental roles to mentor, educate, and assist students day to day. However, the resources dedicated to security personnel vary from district to district — with rural communities often unable to finance a full-time position. As a result, on-site assets in House District 60 include: contracted personnel, a School Resource Officer (SRO) or independent personnel, a campus-wide police department or appointed personnel, or implementation of a guardian or marshal program.

The Texas State School Safety Center defines the role of a School Resource Officer as "licensed peace officers employed by a local law enforcement agency (city, county, etc.) that are permanently assigned to serve the school district or campus."^{vii} ISDs enter into contracts with local police departments, county sheriff's departments, or state agencies to receive a dedicated officer for a negotiated amount. The goal for every district is to have one SRO per campus; however, that feat is only possible for the relatively larger school districts in House District 60. The contracting agency and availability for a School Resource Officer vary across districts based on municipality size.

Rural ISDs (with the exception of the largest towns within a county) source their School Resource Officer from the county sheriff's department. If a district can afford to source a full-time SRO, this can cost a district approximately \$60,000-\$98,000 per officer during the normal school hours, not including extracurricular activities or events. Historically, in Parker County, the sheriff's department has partnered with their rural districts to bear some of the cost of providing a SRO to

the ISD; however, changing economic and budgetary decisions have forced the sheriff's office to restructure their partnerships in the coming academic year. The affected ISDs are understanding of the situation, but fear that the reconsideration of this partnership could make a SRO unaffordable in their community due to the significant increase in cost and lack of flexibility in an ISD's budget.

In Palo Pinto County, rural ISDs cannot afford a full-time School Resource Officer, and the smaller sheriff's department does not have the staffing to provide an officer to be stationed at each campus or even ISD. Instead, the county rotates its resources amongst the smaller districts as they are available throughout the school day. This creates significant concerns, considering the large, unurbanized geography of Palo Pinto County. At any given point, law enforcement may be 25-40 minutes from a campus during an emergency event. The exception in Palo Pinto County is in Mineral Wells, the county's largest municipality, where the local police department splits the cost of 4 SROs (two full-time, two part-time) at 50/50 with the school district. As a result, there is one SRO for all four campuses, making it one of the few ISDs in House District 60 with a police SRO at each campus that contracts with the local law enforcement. An additional anomaly to this trend is Stephens County, which has one ISD countywide and is assisted frequently by the Stephens County Sheriff's Department and local police.

Suburban ISDs in House District 60, who contract School Resource Officers, spend considerably more per year on personnel, but at the trade-off of a larger police presence on campus. Even with this expanded annual cost, metropolitan ISDs still have to supplement law enforcement to secure each campus. One suburban district with an enrollment of 6,855 students currently spends \$500,000 per year to sustain 5 SROs and two supplementary peace officers. The partnership is shared with the city authority, and the ISD is making funds available to add five additional officers before the next academic year to cover all 12 campuses — potentially doubling their security budget. Another suburban ISD with approximately 8,000 students currently only supplies five full-time SROs to cover 11 campus buildings, making the ratio of contracted SRO to student significantly higher than what would be the case in a rural community.

At the same time, suburban SROs take on a larger role within the school district and student body. Typically, these SROs are at the school during the entire school day, as opposed to dropping in on occasion. Thus, the school district has greater opportunities to use the SRO in creative ways to add additional education opportunities. In one district, a full-time police officer teaches the

criminal justice class and serves a dual role as an educator and law enforcement presence. Rural districts that are currently without a SRO have expressed a desire to bring in an applicant who also has a passion for education to utilize them in additional roles outside of emergency management. This way, ISDs can extract extra value from the high annual cost of covering a campus with contracted personnel.

School districts under the Guardian Program can "grant written permission for anyone, including designated employees, to carry firearms on campus,"^{viii} whereas the School Marshal Program "allows public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to appoint school marshals. The sole purpose of a school marshal is to prevent the act of murder or serious bodily injury on school premises."^{ix} For rural schools that cannot afford to contract a School Resource Officer or urban schools that need to supplement their personnel in a cost-effective way, guardians and marshals play an integral role in school safety.

Contrary to popular belief, guardians and marshals are not appointed to carry a firearm on campus without any consequence, but instead undergo a minimum of 16-80 hours of rigorous emergency training, psychological evaluations, and demonstrate proficiency with a firearm in order to make sure that only the most determined and qualified faculty have access to a concealed weapon. In House District 60, many ISDs require their guardians to far exceed the 16-hour limit before being placed in a classroom. Multiple districts require anywhere from 40-60 hours of training before allowing a teacher or employee to carry. Guardians in many ISDs are required to undergo continuing education and fire at least 1,000 rounds per academic year at a shooting range. The primary purpose of a guardian is to neutralize a shooter should the need arise, a situation that some teachers feel uncomfortable undertaking. No faculty or administrator is forced to carry a firearm against their will and can choose to opt out of their guardian responsibilities, at any time during or after the training, should they feel incapable of performing the necessary duty.

In House District 60, guardians and marshals are trained either via outside security consultants or through the local police departments. In Parker County, a local ISD school board member is a retired DPS officer who trains guardians statewide. His particular trainings and services come highly regarded across all ISDs that have brought him to work with the guardian program. Guardianship means that you must be willing to do whatever is necessary to protect your students or neutralize a potential shooter. An educator stepping up for that responsibility against

an invasive stranger is a difficult undertaking in and of itself; understanding that the attacker may be a current student is a burden many realize they cannot accept. The training provided by this particular school board member equips guardians to be ready for any emergency situation, and their presence in the classroom should be a relief to many parents.

When a school district chooses to not hire an outside consultant for the guardian program, they instead turn to their local law enforcement for training. Partnering with local law enforcement has many benefits. First responders can get to know which educators are guardians in the event of an active shooter situation. Guardians are trained to drop their weapons in the presence of police; however, in a high-pressure situation, a basic level of familiarity during the course of a 16-hour training cannot be overstated. Second, school guardians are trained to understand the response protocol of local law enforcement, allowing a faculty member to know what to expect during a real crisis. Lastly, in some cases, the local law enforcement is willing to absorb a portion of the training cost. Guardian programs are cheaper than contracting a SRO or establishing an independent police department, but it still has an attached cost. Consultant fees can vary from district to district; however, in some instances, local entities leverage partnerships to reduce costs. One police department in Parker County donates 40 hours of an officers time, and the ISD pays an additional \$9,000 annually.

School marshals, on the other hand, differ from guardians in that they act as school-based law enforcement personnel used to prevent serious harm amongst the study body, as opposed to focusing on solely neutralizing an active shooter. School marshals are required to undergo 80 hours of state required training from a Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) instructor. This is in contrast to a guardian program where the local ISD sets majority of the training guidelines or policy. In House District 60, very few ISDs implement a school marshal program. Districts tend to train local guardians or rely on a traditional SRO for security personnel. Nevertheless, the few schools that appointed school marshals have reported high satisfaction with the program. School marshals allow for an extension of traditional law enforcement on campuses beyond what a guardian program can provide. Many suburban schools use school marshals as a supplement to monitor campuses that are not staffed by a SRO, having them patrol campuses in full uniform and assist the police departments and administration as needed.

For more rural ISDs, the cost to train guardians or marshals is much more palatable to the annual budget. However, while larger schools can use appointed personnel to supplement existing security personnel, some rural ISDs are reliant on guardians to be their first line of defense until outside support arrives. While the programs allow for more tools in the toolbox for smaller communities, employees from a district still have to apply. A lack of applications in a district that needs stronger protection can create vulnerabilities for campuses. As a result, cost-effective, professional alternatives need to be considered for rural ISDs.

Independent campus police departments are law enforcement agencies that are entirely created, staffed, and managed by the Independent School District. In House District 60, only one campus operates its own police force, and the decision to do so was created by a unique set of circumstances. First, the municipality does not have a police force of its own. As a result, the county would be the contracting agency for a campus officer. Second, the rapid residential development and nearly 7,500 student enrollment would require an enormous contracting fee for the county to secure enough police for all 12 campuses. Third, the large tax base provides enough revenue to fit a police department within the budget, costing the district anywhere from \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 annually. While this amount is staggering in isolation, it is still significantly more cost-effective per officer than partnering with another municipality or the county for full-time police.

While unique, the campus law enforcement arm has been a model that works exceptionally well for this district. The school board and superintendent can make staffing cuts or additions at will, providing much-needed flexibility for a district that is preparing for rapid expansion. The large security budget also eliminates any pressure to implement a guardian or marshal program, preferring to keep security in the hands of local peace officers. As a result, this district was the first in Parker County to place a full-time security officer on every campus, and the constant law enforcement patrol serves as a passive deterrent.

V. MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

In incidents in which students are directly threatened by another, the perpetrator, more often than not, is one who is mentally troubled. For schools across House District 60, prioritizing mental health care, access, and resources is paramount, especially for students after the pandemic,

to prevent a tragedy before it occurs. Much like other security measures discussed thus far, the level of access to mental health resources for students varies wildly across the district. Each ISD, in its own way, can attest that mental health among students is in a sharp decline from where it was pre-pandemic. The reported cases of suicide and depression to school counselors have increased drastically, with one larger district reporting over 200 instances in which there was a suicide-related outcry to school faculty — a large percentage of which occurred at the district's elementary campus. Disciplinary action amongst students has also increased in parallel; administrators from a rural district noted that once they transitioned back into full in-person learning, they had more students in their Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) facility, which forced the ISD to add a second DAEP instructor to handle the load.

Across House District 60, the majority of schools have at least one dedicated mental health counselor or crisis intervention counselor for the upcoming academic year. Unfortunately, the caseload for each of the crisis intervention team members has sharply increased in line with the aforementioned growth of mental health outcries among students. Fortunately, each district has been more than satisfied with its crisis intervention team, many of which are working long hours to help students struggling with complex issues at home and in the classroom. Larger school districts in Parker County are now opting to supplement their mental health with full-time social workers on staff. The social workers alleviate the caseload for crisis intervention counselors, the former handling the day-to-day needs of the student body while the latter is in charge of acute threats.

Nevertheless, for large districts, there are still high costs to adding qualified personnel, especially in handling students from K-12. The largest school in Parker County spends roughly \$750,000 per year on mental health services alone. These services include a behavior instructor, intervention counselor, and four crisis counselors across the primary and secondary campuses, as well as two full-time coordinators working district-wide. The school's BESST (Behavior Emotional Support Services) Team further conducts active threat assessments, parent communication safety plans, and resources provided to students and families for mental health wellness or recovery. This expansive mental health model has seen immediate returns in the overall wellbeing of students, with a 30-40% statistical drop in DAEP action as a result. While the

enormous success justifies its high price tag, such a model is unfortunately not feasible in parts of House District 60.

Fortunately, ISDs who cannot support a comprehensive mental health services system have additional support. Coke Beatty, Executive Director for Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral & Developmental Healthcare, has partnerships with every ISD in House District 60 with the exception of one — which instead works with facilities in Tarrant County. Pecan Valley has a traveling critical incident stress management team who deploys all across the service area to respond after a tragedy. Recently, when a young student was killed in a collision, the team worked with the district to provide direct trauma care and counseling to students and staff that were in need. In more severe situations concerning a student, ISDs can make use of Pecan Valley's mobile crisis center.

Pecan Valley works actively alongside other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) facilities and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop student-based mental health care to some success. Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education), which is run through regional education service centers, is showing promising results; however, it has an operating cost of \$3-5K and requires a partnership with a mental health authority. The center is also expanding its telehealth and teletherapy services to schools and law enforcement to cut down on travel time between an incident and the subject receiving care. While telehealth is no sure substitute for face-to-face conversation, adding an additional tool provides ISDs and Pecan Valley with much-needed flexibility.

Nevertheless, Pecan Valley was not safe from the "Great Resignation," and, like many other operations in Texas, is struggling to find staff. At the time of writing, there were 82 staff vacancies out of 391 budgeted positions. In the Cleburne clinic alone, there are 18 full-time case manager positions for 1,100+ patients per year. Rising costs for services have also slowed the tempo of IDDs across Texas. The state has not given general revenue funding to community mental health center that was untied to a specific program since 2009, and IDDs primarily operate their general revenue off of Medicaid reimbursement rates.

These changes to mental health funding were, at the time, equity-based. Funding for centers was largely a political decision, with more senior legislators securing more funding for their specific communities. Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has committed that

any new general revenue funding would be distributed on an equity basis. Unfortunately, the State of Texas is working off Medicaid rates that are outdated and need to be updated to provide a stronger level of funding to mental health clinics that are providing a bulk of infrastructure to local school districts.

For many ISDs, contracting out mental health resources is the most viable solution until funding is made available for each school district to expand its mental health resources. Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds have been spent by the districts to supplement the mental health department of their program; however, a more long-term state solution is needed to ensure these positions remain in the future with minimal sacrifice to the school's operating budgets. Suitable access to mental health is the key to preventing another tragedy, and it is the number one focus in school security from every administration — both public and private.

VI. LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

In detailing the various school security functions that exist throughout the district, the most significant similarity across all ISDs is that they are all different. We can divide our district into rural and urban/suburban counties; however, even amongst schools with similar attendance, the school security programs are unique and vary significantly. Every ISD is working to protect their students' mental and physical well-being in a way that makes sense for their community. As a state, we have a habit of levying mandates to treat all schools alike and wanting every school to be held to the same standard. While accountability is essential, it is also crucial to consider that a school district is beholden to the parents and students of an ISD more than it is beholden to the legislature.

The 88th Legislative Session will be important for charting the road ahead for public education, and it is vital that we return to a model of local control and a district-first taxpayer accountability model. The crux of our legislative recommendations that my staff and I will pursue in the next session can be summed up as stopping "one-size-fits-all" mandates. However, being *against* something is never as useful to a constituency as being *for* something. As a result, we have taken the feedback from our districts and distilled it into a scalable set of propositions to better address the concerns statewide while maximizing independent district decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION I: DON'T PENALIZE PROACTIVE DISTRICTS

Every ISD in Texas House District 60 will openly admit that there is always more work to be done to bolster school safety. As updated technologies enter the market and local ISDs continue to expand, even the most advanced districts are prepared to continually reinforce their existing operations. However, schools in our district tend to fall into two categories: ahead of the statewide standard of security and mental health or behind it. This discrepancy is, of course, a product of the high cost of security infrastructure that disproportionately affects the budgets of smaller, rural, or non-K-12 schools that cannot afford to make the same improvements as larger, urban or suburban ISDs.

As the State of Texas prioritizes more funding for school security in the interim and the 88th Legislative Session, it is expected that safety funds will be made available for rural, smaller schools to afford to expand their security operations. On June 28, 2022, the State of Texas announced \$105.5 million for school safety and mental health initiatives — some of which will go to school districts to improve security infrastructure. It is vital that the schools who need financial assistance to secure their campuses receive it; however, at the same time, the state must also consider the ISDs who, through foresight, bonds, or tax base, have invested millions of dollars into proactive security operations.

By restricting funds to only add functionality instead of also reimbursing the districts that have implemented it, the state reduces its incentive for communities to innovate and become proactive towards school safety and security. A larger district would be more apt to wait until funds are made available from the state rather than appeal to their own tax base for a bond to finance those systems ahead of time. Smart ISD management is weighing the priorities of a school district, obligations to the state, and financial resources to improve the educational experience from year to year.

In our current times, this means having to make sacrifices in one department to fully fund another, and when it comes to the lives of children, our ISDs will finance whatever they can. Even in rural communities, ISDs have cut spending on services and additional programs to take the necessary steps to expand security operations where they can, or local taxpayers have raised their tax rates to approve bonds that keep their children safe. By not making funds available to reimburse

and reward districts who have made sacrifices to stay on top of school security requirements, we are, in effect, punishing urban schools, rural schools, and taxpayers alike who are paying out of their own pocket to stay ahead of the curve.

RECOMMENDATION II: DEVELOP COUNTY-WIDE A.E.P. INFRASTRUCTURE

Rural and suburban communities are dependent on cooperation. For each municipality and school district to be as successful as possible, inter-district communication is critical — especially when it concerns the education of a student. In rural areas, local co-ops and initiatives help bridge the gap in alternative services that are not readily available. In more suburban counties, expedient communication keeps all ISDs and local agencies operating on the same page. Involvement and cooperation at the county level are vital to establishing a shared framework to supplement local educational opportunities; however, in House District 60, the existence of countywide educational infrastructure is behind what is needed by many parents, students, and administrators alike.

Throughout meetings across the district, alternative learning centers for students who have severe mental or neurological deficiencies that go far beyond the capabilities of a public school classroom are lacking — leaving many students trapped in a pressure cooker environment and administrators struggling to maintain a distraction-free learning environment. Students in classrooms with severe disabilities who manifest themselves in violent ways cannot be removed from a classroom setting. More often than not, a teacher or aide is not equipped to serve the child in the way that is best for them. Stories were shared of students who have repeatedly urinated in public spaces, bit off a portion of a teacher's ear, and thrown furniture at other students and faculty. These students do not need to be in classrooms with their peers; however, their mental needs tie the hands of administrators preventing any form of disciplinary action.

For these students, a dedicated alternative education facility with a robust, professional special needs and mental health staff is necessary to ensure that students have the ability to be educated in an environment that suits their particular needs. Discussions and support across all three counties have been geared towards a countywide or regional facility that takes in students with severe mental health disabilities from all surrounding school districts within an area. These

students would be those who need access to more experienced professionals and are away from a classroom environment where they potentially pose a danger to themselves and others.

Coke Beatty with Pecan Valley Centers for Behavioral & Developmental Healthcare has offered to partner with this facility to supply staff for the mental health component, the ISDs would finance staff positions, and the county would supply the facility and oversight. Currently, such facilities do exist in some counties in the State of Texas; however, they include a residential component where children remain on site. The legislature should pass a pilot program to develop a countywide facility of this nature that does not include a residency component, where students can return home at the end of the school day, similar to DAEP. The purpose is to ensure that the student can receive the quality of care and treatment needed at little to no cost to the parent, as well as to allow administrators the ability to remove students who have educational needs outside the limits of what the ISD can provide.

Outside of a strict disability and mental health focus, additional countywide infrastructure must be bolstered for juvenile justice education. In the majority of schools in the district, the administration would confirm that a small percentage of students make up the most frequent disciplinary cases. In many situations, these students pose a direct danger to other students outside of a manifestation of a disability. These students develop early criminal records, and ISDs have minimal recourse outside of DAEP facilities to administer alternative education. In these situations, Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP) Centers are where such students are placed; however, House District 60 is at a severe lack of those facilities. Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code requires all counties with a population of 125,000 or greater shall develop a juvenile justice education program.^x As of the 2020 Census, Parker County has increased from a population of 116,927 to 146,222 — placing them well above the 125,000 population threshold and without a suitable JJAEP facility. The code outlines exceptions to this rule; however, Parker County does not meet any of the qualifications required, meaning they will be expected to develop a facility in the near future.^{xi}

Both Palo Pinto and Stephens Counties are not mandated to develop a JJAEP facility of their own as they are well below the population requirement; however, they may develop one under Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code, which does not have to be approved by the state or compliant with the state regulations on juvenile justice education.^{xii} These services are a necessity

in rural communities. In Stephens County, the lack of space at outside facilities has forced the county to purchase a bed in one of these spaces at an annual rate, on the chance that it is needed. While expensive, without a reserved slot, the county would have no place to send the individuals other than back into the community. Unfortunately, considering the burden to develop those facilities fall on the county, developing a new unit is cost prohibitive. Once the structure is built, it is on the ISDs to pay per student sent to the facility, requiring districts to pay additional charges, on an already tight budget, to remove a dangerous student from the premises.

Parker, Palo Pinto, and Stephens County ISDs have stressed the need for an expanded juvenile justice system in rural and suburban areas, yet the cost to undertake the projects comes out of the pocket of counties and the local taxpayers. Heading into the 88th Legislature, expanding the ability for counties to receive access to develop essential school security infrastructure, such as mental health and juvenile corrections facilities, should be paramount. Keeping these students on campus increases the risk of a security incident. Removing them is the simplest way to ensure they can be properly educated and the remaining students can be in a distraction-free environment. Per Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code, the Office of State-Federal Relations (OSFR) is tasked with helping the JJAEP authority to find supplemental funds to assist in operations and education costs; however, the state should take steps to fully fund the development of these facilities in rural and urban communities – especially where they are required by law.^{xiii}

RECOMMENDATION III: INCREASE THE SCHOOL SECURITY ALLOTMENT

In the wake of the 2018 Santa Fe High School Shooting, the 86th Legislature and the Texas Education Agency developed two funding programs to help schools improve school safety and security infrastructure. Senate Bill 500 appropriated \$100 million for a school security grant program for the 2019-2020 academic year, and Senate Bill 11 provided for the annual school security allotment in which districts would receive state assistance proportional to their attendance. Since its implementation, Texas school districts only receive \$9.72 per student in funding from the allotment^{xiv}.

While any amount spent towards school safety makes a difference, both rural and urban schools alike across House District 60 have stated that those funds are not enough. For rural

schools that have low overall attendance and enrollment, the amount does not begin to cover the cost of significant security upgrades on campuses, nor can it finance the salary of additional security personnel. For urban schools, more campus buildings and larger student bodies make the funding negligible compared to what is needed to maintain safety.

One rural school in my district only received \$700 from the state to supplement a year's worth of security costs, while another fast-growth district received \$25,000 — considering the costs discussed for a mid-size district's school security, this allotment was only enough to make one round of upgrades to their camera equipment. As a result, across all school districts in House District 60, increasing the school security allotment was a top priority to allow schools the flexibility to make meaningful security upgrades that fit their unique needs.

The most frequent suggestion was to increase the state's contribution from \$9.72 per student to around \$100 per student. This would drastically increase the amount the state would spend on the program annually; however, this ballpark figure is what our public school districts feel they need for the funding to have a meaningful impact in both rural and suburban communities.

Comptroller Glenn Hegar has announced the state would have a record-breaking \$27 billion in surplus funds available heading into the 2022-2023 biennium. Every legislator has their own ideas on how that money should be spent (property taxes, border security, education, etc.), but the events of this past year have shown us that it is time to make a significant contribution to our schools to ensure the safety of our children. Using additional surplus funds to raise the security allotment to a more robust amount will have a direct, immediate impact on the well being of millions of school-aged children across the state; and at the same time, increasing funds supplemented by the state would reduce the necessity for school security bonds to meet safety requirements that continues to burden the taxpayers.

RECOMMENDATION IV: REMOVE BARRIERS FOR SECURITY PERSONNEL

As discussed in Section IV: On-Site Security Personnel, a School Resource Officer on campus is an invaluable asset for bolstering security infrastructure. Unfortunately, very few districts — small or large — have enough financial resources to supply every campus with a full-

time peace officer, and many local law enforcement agencies cannot shoulder the cost or staffing of contracting officers out to every building in every ISD. As a result, there are severe deficiencies in access to trained resource officers throughout House District 60. At the same time, a police officer at every campus is a long-term financial project, and many schools in House District 60 lack any formal police presence at all. At a moment when the legislature is prioritizing school security, it is vital that we implement legislation that removes barriers to qualified security personnel on campus while at the same time making sure that those who carry a firearm are trained for an emergency situation.

For many rural and suburban districts, guardians and marshals serve as the primary or supplemental armed personnel in the event of an attacker on campus. There are teachers in House District 60 willing to take on the training and responsibility necessary to be appointed to these roles; however, many teachers are still not comfortable with concealed carrying. Many districts have reported that guardians and marshals are also unable to properly provide adequate coverage for special school events that could potentially be a target. Sporting events, theatre productions, and band concerts tend to have little security outside of what is covered by municipal or county law enforcement. In a larger county, like Parker, multiple school events are taking place at one time, stretching resources thin. To prioritize school safety for special events, as well as allow rural schools the flexibility to hire outside guardians and marshals, the legislature must develop a comprehensive volunteer School Resource Officer (vSRO) plan for school districts.

In the 87th Legislature, my office authored House Bill 2557, a rural school security bill that would allow a board of trustees to appoint a qualified, retired peace officer or military veteran to serve as a vSRO. Under the current language, the school district would have to be located in a county with a population of less than 150,000. Due to the 2020 Census, the population estimates require the legislation to be updated to include rural schools that reside in counties over the original threshold. Rural school security volunteers would be considered by the governing school board and subjected to proper training and a comprehensive background check. The local district would also get the final say on any volunteer looking to carry a firearm on campus.

Rural schools and small communities need extra support to help secure their facilities, and suburban areas under the population threshold could make use of expanded supplemental assistance at special events. The legislation would be 100% opt-in, and any rural district that did

not feel comfortable allowing retired law enforcement or military to supplement security would not be forced to have them on staff. ISDs in House District 60 who have underfunded security personnel have been fully supportive of House Bill 2557 and would be willing to review applicants in their community if they cannot find the funding to contract a full-time SRO. Outside of a vSRO program, the state must make access to funds for full-time security personnel readily available and allow schools to reimburse themselves for officer services or be able to hire at least a minimum of one police officer to maintain a safe learning environment.

RECOMMENDATION V. ADDRESS TEACHER RETENTION AND SHORTAGES

Teachers are the heart and soul of what makes Texas' public education system great, and everyone can remember at least one teacher that has made an impact on their life. Students, parents, and administration staff will line up to say that dedicated, qualified teachers in every classroom are instrumental to the safety of our campuses. These teachers make up a core piece of safety and security, as well as early warning and early behavioral interpretation to stop a crisis before it materializes. Veteran teachers in the classroom are adept at recognizing early warning signs in students, and many students feel comfortable coming to a teacher they know and trust.

Unfortunately, the United States is in the midst of a growing teacher shortage, and the State of Texas is no exception. While the TEA has testified that there are more teachers employed during the 2021-2022 academic year than any other^{xv}, those numbers fail to account for the large number of school districts that are either understaffed or filling teaching vacancies with para-professionals. At the same time, the gap between teacher attrition and teacher hiring has closed for the first time since 2012^{xvi}. Historically new hires in Texas have far outpaced those who leave the profession, but as of this summer, those statistics have reached a 1:1 ratio.^{xvii}

For many ISDs in House District 60, the struggle to hire and retain teachers for the upcoming academic year is demoralizing, and many are looking for an immediate solution to plug the holes as the 2022-2023 academic year begins. During this time, many have wanted to turn to a readily available resource of passion and educational expertise: retired teachers. Nearly all of the ISDs suffering from the adverse effects of the teacher shortage have retired teachers available to step up and fill in the gaps. These teachers bring decades of classroom expertise to districts

struggling to recruit new educators. Moreover, in the wake of historical inflation, gas prices, and deflated purchasing power of annuities, many of these retirees are eager to return to work to supplement their income in the communities they love. Making sure that each district is fully staffed is vital to ensure that all teachers, coaches, and administrative staff can devote 100% of their time to their job to do their part in each classroom to keep our children safe.

Unfortunately, Texas statute currently penalizes retirees from returning to work full-time unless the educator has taken a year-long hiatus from the profession. Texas law further requires the school districts to pay an approximate 16% surcharge for each retired teacher they hire, as well as a significant contribution to the insurance system. Under normal circumstances, these guidelines are to maintain the actuarial soundness of the TRS Fund; however, it is clear that our state is not under normal circumstances, and many of the school districts across the state are forced to forgo experienced teachers due to an inability to afford these required costs. In years prior, districts and retired teachers could enter into payment contracts with one another to help offset the cost, but some districts were unfairly passing off these costs to retirees. As a result of these bad actors, in the last session, Senate Bill 202 mandated that the ISD is solely responsible for all additional charges when hiring retired teachers. Unfortunately, now, many ISDs in House District 60, and across the state, cannot afford to hire back retired teachers under these circumstances — further exacerbating the employee shortage.

On July 18, 2022, my office authored a letter discussing this situation to Texas Education Agency Commissioner Mike Morath and formally requested that his agency do what it can to alleviate the surcharge requirements for the upcoming academic year; however, it is on the legislature to make a concentrated effort this upcoming session to pass meaningful reforms to the retired teacher hiring process. Retired teachers must be allowed to return to work for minimal penalties to the districts until the teacher shortage crisis has subsided. Fully staffing our schools with qualified professionals reduces the workload for administration staff and provides a well-informed educator in as many classrooms as possible.

RECOMMENDATION VI: SET REVENUE CEILINGS FOR CHAPTER 41

In 1993, the 73rd Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 7, authorizing Chapter 41 of the Texas Education Code to equitably fund all school districts in the State of Texas. Chapter 41,

otherwise known as "Robin Hood," came after the Texas Supreme Court's controversial *Edgewood Independent School District v. Kirby* decision, which found that the state's current method of financing school districts disproportionately hurt lower-income ISDs leading to a violation of Article 7 of the Texas Constitution. As a result, Chapter 41 requires school districts who were capped at a rate based on attendance on the total revenue they are allowed to generate from their local property taxes. Excess funds are sent back to the state to be redistributed among districts that are under the revenue cap.^{xviii} During the first year of the Robin Hood program, Texas collected around \$131 million in recapture payments from 34 districts — in 2021, that amount has expanded to almost \$3 billion.

In the 86th Legislature, House Bill 3 repealed portions of the original Chapter 41 language and created more options for districts to keep their funding under Chapter 49. However, despite years of tinkering and nearly three decades since its original implementation, the recapture system has spun out of control and currently disproportionately impacts rural schools, which are in desperate need of funding. While the Robin Hood Program cannot be directly repealed without a full reconsideration of our school finance system, the state's insistence on deciding how much each school needs to operate is counterproductive to the increased push for upgraded security in schools. Many school districts are facing explosive growth; they are working desperately to bolster attendance to avoid overburdensome recapture fees, yet for some smaller districts, the administration has no option but to pay obscene amounts back to the system.

For example, two rural Palo Pinto County districts are sending back \$5.4 million and \$8.2 million in recapture funds leaving their administration with only \$1.4 million and \$4 million to run their district. These rural schools are blessed with segments of valuable property; however, they are now being required to send 50-60% of their total revenue back to the state. A reduction in an operating budget of nearly 60% is egregious and comes at the cost of the administration being financially unable to make the necessary security additions needed to keep their school safe. When discussing earlier the school security allotment, the district that sends back \$5.4 million was the same ISD the state awarded \$700 for security.

At the same time, these are the ISDs that have found it increasingly impossible to pass a bond to make the improvements to security and staff that they desperately need. As a result of the high property taxes and values in the area, residents rightly do not want to spend any more money

on taxes than they already are. Consequently, many of these residents are unaware that their district has to send the majority of their tax dollars to districts across Texas. We are asking our schools to make vital adjustments to the safety and security of their students while at the same time draining away large portions of the funds that can make it happen.

It is understood that the *Edgewood Independent School District v. Kirby* decision necessitates an equitable school finance system and there are undeniable realities associated with living in a lower-income school district. The abolishment of the Robin Hood System without any replacement is not the direction schools are looking to take. However, the legislature can compromise on finance by setting a hard cap on the total amount of revenue that can be sent for recapture. No district should be forced to pay more than half of its collected revenue back to the state. Current limitations of recapture do exist under Chapter 41 of the Education Code^{xix}; however, broadening the subchapter and capping wealth redistribution at 50% is a necessary addition to support rural schools who are unable to make the high cost improvements that the taxpayers and state expect from their school district. The current system disadvantages taxpayers, the school districts, and the students who are attending rural public schools. Strict revenue caps throughout the state would aid in allowing smaller districts to have the resources necessary to promote a safe and secure learning environment while also respecting the obligation to Article 7 by supporting underfunded urban districts across Texas.

RECOMMENDATION VII: DON'T FORGET ACCREDITED PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Unlike major metropolitan areas, the amount of private schools in House District 60 is minimal compared to the number of public schools that occupy the same geography. Across the three counties, there are only five accredited private schools according to the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission: Community Christian School, Coups Christian Academy, Trinity Christian Academy, Victory Baptist Academy, and Weatherford Christian School. Uniquely, unlike other larger suburban and rural communities, much of the administration between the public and private school districts work collaboratively to ensure each student gets the education that fits their needs. To that extent, for many private schools, the TEAs accreditation is a strong alternative to equip their students for post-secondary education.

Accreditation through the Texas Education Agency offers many benefits, such as the transferability of credits, teacher recognition for salary incrementation, and access to resources through the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission. Nevertheless, while those who seek out private schooling due so for a reduced government oversight into their child's education, many schools that become accredited are finding themselves hamstrung by regulations on safety and security. Private schools in House District 60 have received correspondence over upcoming requirements and additions necessary to facilitate a more secure facility. On the face of it, there should be no objection to this concern, as students who attend public, private, home, or charter schools should all be safe from danger. However, due to private schools not being operated by the state, many are ineligible to receive the funds necessary to comply with these regulations.

This office is not advocating for the direct state supplementation of private schools as it jeopardizes the delicate balance between private and public education; yet, there is a concern that if the state begins to hand down more mandates over public safety, it is in the best interests of all concerned to make available grants or appropriations to assist in securing their facilities. In some areas, private schools may be bringing in enough profit to handedly pay for any necessary upgrades; however, rural and suburban private schools are often not operating with the same financial margins.

In an ideal situation, accredited private schools would not have to worry about unfunded mandates from the state, but the safety of our students is an immediate case for improvements to be made across the board. The legislature should, in addition, be willing to adopt an alternate policy for one-time supplemental funds to be made available for schools accredited with TEA that have to comply with unfunded mandates.

VII. CONCLUSION

As a husband, father, and grandfather, the stories in the aftermath of the Uvalde shooting will never leave my mind. The thought of losing a child to a senseless act of violence is nauseating, and my heart bleeds for the families and community that was shattered on May 24th. As a legislator, I represent thousands of parents who are afraid — afraid for the safety of their kids in classrooms and looking to the people they elected to represent them to make sure they never have to reckon with a suffering too unbearable to comprehend.

We have a responsibility not just to "do something," but to do the right thing; a responsibility to listen to our teachers, local law enforcement, and parents to deliver solutions that not only make our schools safer, but to do it without resulting in simple "one-size-fits-all" government mandates. This report was compiled with input from almost 100% of the public and private schools that I represent in House District 60. I am proud of my staff for working hard to address where our district is successful, where we need to improve, and what elected officials can do in the upcoming legislative session to make an immediate, targeted change in the lives of both my constituents and Texans across our great state.

Pilot programs such as developing our county-wide infrastructure will have direct benefits to the people of House District 60; while maximizing local control to handle their community. Large scale reforms, such as capping Chapter 41, establishing a volunteer SRO program, or increasing the school security allotment will create a seismic shift in education security and quality statewide. The point is that each of our school districts are unique, and need to be treated as such. Our security is only as strong as the control we cede to those who know their communities the most intimately. There is a considerable unease from law enforcement and school faculty who anticipate the Texas Legislature will implement more mandates or drastically expand the extracurricular responsibilities of school districts, while at the same time, offering no financial support to help administration fulfill those requirements. As a state, we have an opportunity to do the opposite, and make sure each ISD can create a safe, secure, and tailored learning environment for their students whether they are public, private, or charter.

The information presented in this report does not represent the thoughts or wishes of every district or legislator. The superintendents, teachers, faculty, and first responders who took the time to meet with me and my staff will readily admit that the reforms needed in education and campus safety go far beyond everything contained in this document. Moreover, I do not approach the committee or my colleagues with any demands or concrete statements of how things ought to be. These issues are complicated and will require open and honest debate from all stakeholders in the upcoming session. For the committee and the public, I only offer this report as a piece of an intricate puzzle for your conscious consideration of the thoughts and ideas of in the citizens of House District 60.

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