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22 May 2018

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx,

Thank you for your relentless dedication to school safety. The vulnerabilities our schools face from active shooter threats are best identified by those at the local level where educators and administrators can consider their school's unique challenges and opportunities for improvement. For this reason, I am encouraged by your statement that we need to "work together to support states and school districts in their efforts to keep America's students safe..." It is in this shared aspiration of student safety that I introduced HR 5307, The School Training, Equipment, and Protection (STEP) Act of 2018.

The STEP Act would require that the Department of Education ensure, at minimum, \$50 million of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA/Title IV) block grant be dedicated annually to a list of active shooter deterrent, training, and fortification measures. This bill stems from findings in a 2016 GAO report on K-12 emergency preparedness¹ and a number of roundtables that I held with law enforcement professionals on the subject of school safety and active shooter threats.

The study found that even though the vast majority of schools had created emergency action plans, only 32% reported that they had tested those plans through full-scale exercises with local first responders in the previous three years. The report further states that of those plans that were practiced, only 67% of them involved active shooter training. This indicates that barely one-fifth of our nation's schools have tested their response to hypothetical active shooter situations – an unacceptable statistic in the face of today's reality. The STEP Act is a pivotal first step in helping make school safety infrastructure and training a priority, and this Congress should not hesitate to act until every school is secure and every parent can send their children to school with peace of mind.

Important school safety measures and policies were recently approved with the passage of the STOP Act. However, the status quo still remains without any assurance that Title IV funds are used to address school safety. Given the grotesque nature and frequency of school shootings in recent years, we as lawmakers cannot allow this shortfall to exist.

By ensuring that Title IV funding will be spent on school safety measures through the STEP Act, we can begin ensuring that classrooms and the children in them are safer. These are basic, easily deployable, and common-sense strategies that schools should already be utilizing. The security experts that I have spoken to believe these measures would allow law enforcement agencies to

¹ Improved Federal Coordination Could Better Assist K-12 Schools Prepare for Emergencies - GAO-16-144

better work with educators, practice emergency action plans, and ultimately save lives if the time came and they were needed.

Madame Chairwoman, it is for the reasons outlined above that I ask you to you support the STEP Act through the Education and Workforce Committee deliberative process. From my 18 year career on the Los Angeles Police Department – including several years working directly with my own sons' schools – I have direct experience in working with localities to ensure public safety and peace. Additionally, national and local law enforcement agencies were heavily consulted during the drafting process of this bill.

Already, this bill has received the endorsement of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Major City Chiefs Association, the Los Angeles School Police Officers Association, the National Association of School Resource Officers, and the Police Officers Research Association of California. I urge the Committee to recognize the immense combined expertise behind the STEP Act and understand why it is so vital to the security of our schools that this is passed into law. Please let me know if I can help in any way. Thank you very much for your consideration and commitment to the safety of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Knight", is written over the printed name.

Steve Knight
Member of Congress