MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 5, 2014

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate and House of Representatives

FROM: Ms. Daniese McMullin-Powell, Chairperson State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: H.B. 33 (Public School Alarm Systems)

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed H.B. 33 which is designed to improve school safety by requiring the installation and maintenance of an alarm system in each public school capable of notifying law enforcement of an emergency that can be activated from at least one location in each school. According to the attached June 13, 2013 News Journal article, the legislation is supported by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. The Secretary noted that “many (schools) have a security system in place, which would make installation and maintenance relatively inexpensive.” The article also describes the prime sponsor’s observations that the alarm system could be activated based on a range of events, including shootings, fights, and confrontations. The amendments suggest some vacillation on whether the alarms must be silent and whether they must be directly linked to law enforcement. H.A. 1 would allow schools to decide if alarms would be silent and directly linked to law enforcement. H.A. 2 would require alarms to be silent but not necessarily directly linked to law enforcement.

The fiscal note (attached) is, relatively speaking, modest. Installation would cost $110,500 to $331,500 in State funds and monitoring is projected to annually cost public schools $79,560, i.e., $30/month per building times 221 buildings. This cost compares favorably with other pending legislation (H.B. 221) which would result in retrofitting classroom doors so they are lockable from both inside and outside the classroom. The fiscal note (attached) on that initiative is $3,994,500, more than 10 times the cost of installation of the alarm systems.

SCPD endorses the concept of H.B. 33. The alarm system would enhance timely law enforcement response to school emergencies.
Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions regarding our position or observations on the proposed legislation.

cc: Mr. Darren Lester, DSHS  
    Mr. Brian Hartman, Esq.  
    Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens  
    Developmental Disabilities Council

HB 33 school alarms 3-5-14
School: Bill adds alarm systems

Continued from Page A1 Connecticut, which left 20 students and six adults dead, it also would help in other situations, like fights between students or confrontational parents. Obviously, the concern that’s foremost in our mind is an intruder, but there are lots of different scenarios this could work in,” Miro said.

Secretary of Safety and Homeland Security Lewis Schlief supports the idea. “This is a good idea. It’s another tool in the security toolbox, and we want all the tools we can get,” Schlief said.

Schlief said school alarms are used in some situations where more conventional communication fails.

“Lawmaker banking on panic buttons”

By Matthew Albright

Delaware lawmakers are hoping to improve school security with the addition of panic buttons.

There are certainly tactical situations where you can’t get to a landline or use a cell phone,” he said.

The bill has the support of many teachers and parent groups who say they welcome any reasonable effort to boost school security.

“We support any measure, no matter how big or how small, that improves the safety of the students who learn and educators who work in our public school buildings,” said Fredrika Jenner, president of the Delaware State Education Association.

“We trust those who are safety experts will make reasonable, well thought out decisions and consider the impact on the learning environment.” Only six of the state’s 228 public school buildings are equipped with such a system, according to a report the state Department of Education submitted to the Legislature.

The bill would require the state to pay half the cost of installing the system, but districts would pay for upkeep.

The cost of the program will vary from school to school depending on what security is already in place and what company provides it, Miro said.

Though few schools have a panic button, many have a security system in place, which would make installation and maintenance relatively inexpensive, Schlief said.

Miro said the state estimated it could pay anywhere from $10,500 to $36,000 to install the system. Monthly maintenance fees would be in the neighborhood of $20 to $30 a month. That means all the state’s schools combined would face a total cost of about $79,560 a year.

“We’re not looking at huge costs to the districts,” Schlief said.

Most parents say they’re glad to see the proposal.

“You can’t do enough to make schools safe,” said Pam Sayers, who has a child at Heritage Elementary, a child headed to Delaware Technical High School and a child who just graduated from Cab Calloway School of Arts in Wilmington. “I think this bill is a good idea.”

Sayers said she generally believes her children are safe, but thinks any steps to make them safer are welcome.

“Nowadays, with everything you hear about people doing, you can’t get complacent,” she

YOUR OPINION

Tell us what you think at delawareonline.com

What security measures would be most effective at a school?

YESTERDAY'S POLL RESULTS

Gov. Jack Markell signed a bill last year that charged Safety and Homeland Security staff with helping every school in the state develop a comprehensive safety plan.

In the wake of the Sandy Hook shootings, Markell accelerated that timeline to two years and coiled out $200,000 to speed things up.

As schools develop these plans, they are adding them to a comprehensive secure online portal that will allow law enforcement agencies to learn the layout of every building and plan for evacuations and lockdowns.

Miro said that makes the panic buttons will be especially effective, because police will know exactly where and how to respond to each school.

“This is just one piece of a larger strategy,” Miro said. “This bill fits in nicely with what we’re already doing.”

Schlief said efforts to implement the plans are on schedule.

“When this is done, I think Delaware is going to have some of the best-prepared, best-informed schools in the country for security issues,” he said.

Matthew Albright can be reached at 302-454-6100 or mabright@delawareonline.com. Follow him on Twitter @NAVlife.

CORRECTIONS

LOTTERY: The Powerball numbers for Saturday’s drawing were 01-13-22-36-32 with a Powerball of 15. Incorrect numbers appeared in Sunday’s editions.

To comment about the accuracy, fairness or adequacy of news coverage, contact Lou Layman at 302-231-0790 or Phil Freeman at 302-231-0724. From southern Delaware and other states, call 800-231-9105. Send email to public.schools@delawareonline.com. For questions about classifieds, Delaware, call 800-801-3342.
BILL: HOUSE BILL NO. 33
SPONSOR: Representative Miro
DESCRIPTION: AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO SILENT ALARM SYSTEMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. This Act requires every public school building to be equipped with an alarm system capable of notifying local law enforcement of an emergency that may be manually activated from at least one location within the public school.

2. Based on the Department of Education, there are 228 public school buildings through the State (207 regular and vocational district buildings and 21 charter schools). This does not include Pencader Charter School, which is scheduled to close at the end of the school year. Based on a survey performed by the Department of Safety and Homeland Security, there are a total of 6 school buildings that will meet the requirements of this Act. As such, there are a total of 221 public school buildings impacted by this Act.

3. Depending on the infrastructure needs of the school buildings, the estimated one-time cost per building to satisfy the provisions of this Act is expected to range between $500 to $1,500, which includes labor installation as well as the necessary hardware to install a panic button. Statewide, the projected one-time installation costs range between $110,500 ($500 X 221 buildings) to $331,500 ($1,500 X 221 buildings). The Fiscal Year 2014 Budget, as written by the Joint Finance Committee, includes $700,000 for School Safety Plans that could potentially be used as a source of funding.

4. The ongoing monitoring cost of the system for the link to local law enforcement, through a third party vendor and using a standard telephone line, is assumed to be a local school district/charter school expense at $360 annually per school building ($30 per month/per building). Statewide, monthly monitoring costs are projected to impact all districts/charter schools by $79,560 in total ($360 annually/per building X 221 buildings).

Cost: Fiscal Year 2014: $110,500 to $331,500 for Installation (State)

$79,560 statewide monitoring costs (Local only)

Fiscal Year 2015: $79,560 statewide monitoring costs (Local only)

Fiscal Year 2016: $79,560 statewide monitoring costs (Local only)

Office of Controller General
March 08, 2013
MJ: MJ
0271470003

(Amounts are shown in whole dollars)
BILL:        HOUSE BILL NO. 221
SPONSOR:    Representative Jaques
DESCRIPTION: AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO
             SCHOOL PROPERTY AND HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. This Act will require that every door into a classroom in every public school shall be lockable from both inside and outside of the classroom.

2. Based upon an assessment by the Department of Education, there are a maximum of 12,650 doors in the school districts and 665 doors in the charter schools that may be affected by this Act.

3. The anticipated cost to purchase and install commercial grade, two-way locks is assumed at $300 per door given the variability in the type and age of school facilities, the cost of installation, and the general price to purchase a lock. However, based on an assessment by the Department of Education, the cost may vary up to $600 per door.

Cost:

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<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal Year 2014</td>
<td>$3,994,500 ($300 per door)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiscal Year 2015</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<td>Fiscal Year 2016</td>
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Office of Controller General
January 21, 2014

(MJ:MB)
0271470014

(Amounts are shown in whole dollars)
"I don't think anybody's against the idea. But there are a lot of questions about how we can afford it," said Merv Daugherty, Red Clay School District Superintendent and head of the state's school chiefs. "You're going to be talking about thousands and thousands of dollars. Is that going to come from minor capital funding, which we've seen reduced recently? You can't use local money for a project like this."

Daugherty said the locks, while possibly helpful, are not essential. He points out that schools have worked over recent years to overhaul their security plans, including a statewide planning hub monitored by state safety officials.

Matthew Albright contributed to this article.