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Date: 12/22/2016 12:03:17 PM
Subject: School Security Bill

Dear Ms. Qugiley, thank you for allowing me to send you my thoughts via email. I absolutely guarantee that you will not be placed on any email list. I do hope, though, that you will feel free to email me directly with further thoughts or questions on this or any other subject. Now, to the issue of school safety.

I fear that you have been a victim of fake news, or, at least, a severely deficient reporting of the facts. Allow me to begin from the beginning. Many of our school districts are unable to provide school resource officers, and Townville Elementary reflects that fact here in Anderson County. The latest estimate of the cost of staffing every school in SC with a SRO is \$88m, and that is from last year, so it probably will be higher in 2017. The General Assembly will not appropriate \$88m solely for SROs--it simply won't happen. I and any other member of the Assembly might take the floor for hours and talk about it, plead for it, cajole our colleagues and even filibuster the budget, but it's not going to happen. My goal, therefore, is to pursue that which is achievable. Hence, my bill.

The bill does not automatically arm teachers, or anyone else. The bill does not itself allow teachers with CWPs to start carrying. The bill does not in any way declare that there will be guns in classrooms. The bill, instead, eliminates a state-level mandate that prevents local school districts from making choices that best suit their needs. Please see the language of the bill:

" It shall be unlawful for any person, except state, county, or municipal law enforcement officers or and personnel or school personnel authorized by school officials, to carry on his person, while on any elementary or secondary school property, a knife, with a blade over two inches long, a blackjack, a metal pipe or pole, firearms, or any other type of weapon, device, or object which may be used to inflict bodily injury or death. School officials may require school personnel to receive weapons training before authorizing school personnel to carry a weapon on school property."

The stricken word would be removed from the code and the underlined words would be added to the code. You can see that the bill removes from code the prohibition currently preventing school personnel from carry a weapon. It does not mandate that anyone start carrying a weapon. It simply allows another option for "school officials". "School officials" is defined elsewhere in code as those publicly elected or appointed individuals who control the programs and activities. That means boards and superintendents. Those folks, locally elected and locally accountable, would be given the option of allowing "school personnel" to carry a weapon following a training regimen that those same officials dictate. It would not have to be CMP training only. It would not have to be military experience only. It could be anything that the trustees and superintendent chose following, one presumes, public input (which, by the way, would be the perfect venue for your questions).

"School personnel", furthermore, does not mean teachers, and no one else. School personnel are those individuals employed by or designated by the district to carry out specific duties. So, those folks are accountable to the very same people who would write the policy. Now, in my vision of this, that could mean teachers, if the district wants, or it could mean retired law enforcement or military veterans whom the district employs (likely at a far lower cost than a SRO) for this purpose. Or, it could mean others, but only at the designation of local public school officials. And, those same officials can require whatever training they believe is appropriate. The point is that it's up to the districts and superintendents, i.e. the local community, to decide what's best for them. That, in my view, is the best part of the bill. I don't know your opinion, but I will guess that as a teacher you'd rather have far less in your day that is mandated by Columbia. I believe that too, and that's why my bill aims at local solutions instead of a Columbia mandate.

I am sorry that you have received so little reliable information on my bill, and I hope that this answers at least some of your questions and enlightens my thinking on the subject. This bill, like all bills, will undergo public hearings and it must travel through several stages before it could become law. I am confident that it will receive the highest level of scrutiny, and I hope that my colleagues will improve upon it--that's usually what happens. Please feel free, in the meantime, to contact me at any time, on this or any other subject. Thank you again for your input, and I hope that

you have a Blessed Christmas.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bryant