

Before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB0432 - Active Shooter Drill Notification Bill

SUPPORT

Good afternoon committee members and Chair Atterbeary,

My name is Nico D'Orazio, and I am a Senior at Thomas S. Wootton High School in District 17. I am here today advocating for the support of the Active Shooter Drill Notification Bill, SB0432.

At Wootton, tensions are running high. After having two bomb threats, it is hard to feel safe at school. With each new safety announcement, we worry that it won't be a bomb threat, but rather a real shooter. In fact, having started the second-semester last week, I remember my classmates and I looking around our new classrooms to find safe places in case there is ever a shooter. Therefore, it goes without a doubt that students' fears run deep. Even during just an active shooter drill, our fears remain. With rattling doors, shuttered blinds, and the lights off, it is all too real. Without mental health resources at our hands after a drill, time and time again we have to cope with these stressors on our own.

Rather than potentially traumatizing students with worries of their own lives, SB0432 provides students the opportunity to practice these drills while remaining informed and ensuring they can maintain their mental well-being. Furthermore, with much-needed trauma-informed supports provided after a drill, SB0432 provides a channel for students and staff to work through any emotional distress caused by an active shooter drill.

Lastly, I acknowledge that opponents of this bill state that it will restrict the autonomy of our county Boards of Education. However, in reality, this bill has no infringement upon the operations of currently practiced active shooter drills in Maryland. Rather, with research-founded principles, it aims to make our schools both safer and more comfortable environments. Moreover, because SB0432 requires the Maryland Center for School Safety to collect data on the effectiveness of these drills, we can ensure that each school's drills truly serve Maryland's students. The purpose of every active shooter drill is to train, not to traumatize. Therefore, I urge you to vote in favor of SB0432 in order to truly support the over 800,000 students in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.