

I believe the importance of the school marshal program is critical for improving the safety of all Ohio school students, staff, teachers and communities throughout Ohio.

This new program provides an opportunity to improve the state's school safety protocols and procedures by delivering a comprehensive safety plan for all primary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The biggest challenge I see in place today in Ohio regarding school safety is the individual school's administrators have too much leeway in determining what is best for school safety. Our school administrators have been educated in best practices for what to teach and how to teach not what are best practices for school safety.

What I have personally witnessed in school districts that make emergency drills a priority, doing drills monthly with staff and students, is that the teachers know how to respond to a variety of different threat scenarios. This consistent emergency practicing enables school staff to act with confidence in what is best to protect themselves and their students in a variety of stressful situations. This level of training I believe will save lives.

Unfortunately, today we have a mismatch of trial and error procedures being enacted by school superintendent's and local law enforcement that may or may not be effective. As examples, since the Parkland shooting in Florida 2018, school's leaders cannot decide how to run a fire drill. Many administrators evacuate the school when the fire alarm is sounded others first make sure that it is a legitimate fire drill then evacuate the school. Bomb threats are the same, some schools instead of evacuating the school move the entire student body and staff into the cafeteria or the school's gym, not knowing if there is a potential active shooter outside. What this leads to is a lack of consistency in training, evaluating threats and general safety knowledge that will unfortunately one day potentially lead to a catastrophe in one of our Ohio schools.

What is needed is this new comprehensive School Marshall program to provide the leadership, central command and consistency in training, evaluating school threats and depth of security knowledge that we need in protecting our community's schools.

By providing leadership in school safety training, emergency planning, communications, accountability, reunification and reporting the State of Ohio will take tremendous step forward in protecting our schools from threats that are far too common today.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Charles