

NATIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY SERVICES

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Dr. Kenneth S. Trump, President

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**Testimony of Dr. Kenneth S. Trump
President, National School Safety and Security Services
In Support of Ohio Senate Bill 290
Before the Ohio Senate Education Committee**

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Kenneth S. Trump, President of National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based national consulting firm specializing exclusively in PreK–12 school safety, security, and emergency preparedness. For more than 40 years, I have worked across the U.S. with school districts, law enforcement agencies, state education departments, governmental agencies, and other policy organizations to assess, train, and strengthen their security and emergency readiness.

I have provided consultation and training to thousands of school leaders and first responders in urban, suburban, and rural communities nationwide. My experience includes serving as an investigator and gang unit coordinator for a large urban school district, school security director for a large suburban district, assistant director of a federal-funded school anti-gang project, and a national consultant to local, state, and federal education, public safety, and other governmental entities. I have testified in four Congressional hearings and as an expert witness in school safety litigation in state and federal courts. I am quoted regularly and extensively by national news outlets and have authored three books and more than 450 articles on issues of school security and emergency preparedness policy, operational practices, and crisis leadership.

My firm, National School Safety and Security Services, is recognized as one of the nation's longest-standing independent consulting organizations dedicated solely to school safety — not affiliated with product vendors or security technology sales. Our work emphasizes balanced, practical, and evidence-informed approaches to preventing and managing school security incidents.

Why Senate Bill 290 Is Necessary

1. Law enforcement access has lagged behind modern school security access control measures.

Over the past two decades, schools have significantly strengthened their exterior access control systems—locking doors, securing perimeters, and installing entry vestibules and electronic access systems. While these measures enhance day-to-day security, they also create new barriers for first responders who must gain rapid entry during an emergency such as an active shooter or armed assailant event.

2. Fire departments have key boxes—law enforcement typically do not.

Most schools have long maintained “Knox Boxes” or similar systems exclusively for fire department use, often mounted externally near main entrances. However, these boxes are not typically accessible to law enforcement, even though police are the first responders in the majority of active assailant incidents. This gap leaves law enforcement dependent on delayed keys, on-site staff, or forced entry under high-stress conditions.

3. Seconds and minutes matter when lives are at risk.

In active assailant situations, time equals life. Expecting law enforcement to obtain keys or access cards from schools in advance and store them in patrol cars has proven logistically unworkable—keys become outdated, misplaced, or inaccessible when needed. Having a law enforcement-accessible exterior key box ensures that any first-arriving officer—regardless of jurisdiction—can immediately access master external and internal keys, access cards, and up-to-date school maps to locate, isolate, and neutralize the threat.

Operational and Tactical Benefits

- **Faster entry and coordinated response:** External key boxes remove delays caused by locked perimeters and secure vestibules.
- **Improved interagency consistency:** The bill creates statewide uniformity, ensuring all Ohio schools meet a consistent baseline for law enforcement access.
- **Enhanced preparedness:** Access to maps and keycards supports tactical planning, familiarity with layouts, and safer clearing operations.
- **Reduced property damage:** Officers can gain entry without resorting to forced entry methods, reducing repair costs post-incident.
- **Supports existing safety planning mandates:** This measure complements requirements under Ohio’s school safety plan and mapping provisions by ensuring those plans translate into practical, physical access.

Lessons from School Incidents and After-Action Reports

In numerous school shootings and near misses, law enforcement access—or lack thereof—has been identified in after-action reports as a contributing factor to delayed engagement. Response time is not only about travel time; it’s also about entry time once on scene. Providing secure, reliable, and immediate access to schools aligns with best practices identified nationwide and addresses one of the most overlooked yet fixable vulnerabilities in school emergency preparedness.

Fiscal and Implementation Considerations

SB 290’s provision allowing districts to utilize existing school safety grant funding from the Ohio Attorney General’s office provides a feasible funding path for implementation. The cost of a secure master key box is minimal compared to the potential loss of life, litigation exposure, and post-incident repair costs that can result from delayed or forced entry during a crisis.


Conclusion

Senate Bill 290 is a commonsense, low-cost, high-impact improvement that enhances both school safety and law enforcement effectiveness statewide. It bridges the operational gap between improved school access control and the urgent need for first responders to act immediately during life-threatening emergencies.

I strongly urge your support and passage of this legislation to protect Ohio's students, staff, and first responders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth S. Trump". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'K' and 'T'.

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