



**CRITICAL RESPONSE GROUP**

America's Common Operating Picture®

**Testimony of Andrew Bidwell**

**Critical Response Group (CRG)**

**Interested Party HB 96 - An Amendment Establishing a Crisis Response Mapping Data Grant Program**

**Senate Finance Committee Public Hearing**

**May 23rd, 2025**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee — good morning. My name is Andrew Bidwell, and I am here to testify as an Interested Party on House Bill 96, more specifically, in support of amendment SC1876, which seeks to establish a Crisis Response Mapping Data Grant Program. I am a former special operations commander out of 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group and currently represent Critical Response Group, an organization that specializes in providing standardized school mapping solutions for first responders.

Most people don't think about maps every day, but in the military special operations community I come from, we live by them. Effective maps are the foundation for efficient communication — especially in high-stress environments, unfamiliar terrain, and joint operations involving multiple agencies with different uniforms, different technologies, and even different languages.

Special operations teams rely on a common map format that includes aerial imagery that is oriented north, site-specific labeling, and an alphanumeric grid system. Most critically, *everyone* on the mission uses the same map. So if I say, "meet me at Building 11 in grid square D4," we are referencing the exact same location on the ground. Without this shared reference, communication breaks down. These are the principles that inform the language used in this amendment.

If we put ourselves in the shoes of a first responder arriving at a school during a crisis, it mirrors what we faced overseas. They face a high stress environment, limited time, and multi-jurisdictional responses with agencies using disparate technologies. But while the military equips its teams with standardized maps, most responders in Ohio lack basic visual tools to help them navigate schools effectively.

There is a dangerous assumption that first responders know every detail of every building in their communities and surrounding counties. But if an EMT is told to respond to the cafeteria or to stage a vehicle near door 12, they often have no idea where those locations are. In any emergency, whether medical, fire, or active threat, every second counts. Responders need accurate, accessible information to reduce response time and deploy resources effectively.

Today, at best, many responders have architectural blueprints or floor plans — tools built for construction, not navigation. They are outdated, lack labels for hallways or classrooms, and are inaccessible within systems first responders use daily. We have seen this repeatedly in every Ohio school we have mapped.

A number of counties have already taken action to solve this exact problem. Clark County schools invested in emergency response mapping which has received overwhelming support from public safety officials. They are a model of what is possible when local leaders prioritize responder access to accurate, standardized information. This amendment gives the rest of the state the opportunity to follow that lead.

This grant program would enable schools across Ohio to move beyond ineffective schematics and adopt standardized emergency maps that are instantly accessible to all responders — regardless of their agency, uniform, or system. It is a low-cost, high-impact way to enhance safety for students, educators, and responders alike.

The Ohio Emergency Management Association, Fire Chiefs Association, and multiple Sheriff Departments across the state support this initiative. Across the country, 17 other states have already adopted this exact mapping standard. Ohio should be next.

Included with my testimony is an example of an emergency response map and additional background on how this solution closes a critical gap in current school safety practices. Thank you for considering this proposal. I welcome any questions from the committee.







## News and Press

### **School shootings prompt more states to fund digital maps for first responders**

<https://apnews.com/article/school-shootings-digital-maps-53d7529be615ab15360b2e6a40b043d3>

### **Critical seconds: Metro Detroit schools using new technology to aid first responders**

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2024/10/15/critical-seconds-michigan-schools-using-new-technology-to-aid-first-responders-mapping/75352349007/>

### **Military-style maps on file at Savannah schools to hasten response time in event of shooting**

<https://www.gpb.org/news/2024/09/09/military-style-maps-on-file-at-savannah-schools-hasten-response-time-in-event-of>

### **Miami-Dade mapping out schools to reduce first responder response time**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiAO1kz99-o>

### **Critical Incident Mapping: A Common Operating Picture for Emergency Response**

<https://www.campusafetymagazine.com/insights/critical-incident-mapping-a-common-operating-picture-for-emergency-response/159898/>

### **Many schools in Virginia have digitized their floor plans for ‘very targeted’ approach to school safety**

<https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/virginia-schools-floor-plans-digitized-june-12-2024>

### **Veteran-founded group enhancing school emergency response**

<https://www.wsmv.com/2024/05/30/veteran-founded-group-enhancing-school-emergency-response/>

### **Nebraska state senator says schools could be using critical mapping this year**

<https://wowt.com/2024/05/29/nebraska-state-senator-says-schools-could-be-using-critical-mapping-this-year/>

### **Alabama committee focuses on school safety during shootings, other emergencies**

<https://www.cbs42.com/alabama-news/alabama-committee-focuses-on-school-safety-during-shootings-other-emergencies>

### **Delaware Making Digital Maps of Every Public and Charter School**

<https://www.nbcphiladelphia.com/news/local/delaware-making-digital-maps-of-every-public-and-charter-school/3394450/>

### **After Uvalde, States Look to New Digital Maps to Keep Schools Safe**

<https://stateline.org/2022/10/18/after-ualde-states-look-to-new-digital-maps-to-keep-schools-safe/>

### **It was nothing short of impressive how quickly law enforcement locked down the scene at Abundant Life following the Dec. 16 shooting. They were aided by a “critical incident map” of the school**

[https://www.ibmadison.com/viewpoints/holiday-perks-include-naughty-and-nice-in-wisconsin-politics-business/article\\_016bd6b0-bf1a-11ef-8c7a-93616220e517.html](https://www.ibmadison.com/viewpoints/holiday-perks-include-naughty-and-nice-in-wisconsin-politics-business/article_016bd6b0-bf1a-11ef-8c7a-93616220e517.html)