

Date of Hearing: April 9, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 453 (Muratsuchi) – As Amended February 24, 2025

SUBJECT: Pupil safety: comprehensive school safety plans

SUMMARY: Requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), to convene a stakeholder workgroup on school safety by July 1, 2026, and for the workgroup to make recommendations on the development and approval process as well as the required elements of a comprehensive school safety plan. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the SPI, in consultation with the SBE, to convene a stakeholder workgroup on school safety by July 1, 2026.
- 2) Requires the workgroup to include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a) Two schoolsite administrators, one each from an elementary and a secondary school;
 - b) Two public school teachers, one each from an elementary and a secondary school;
 - c) Two classified school employees, one each from an elementary and a secondary school;
 - d) One representative of a parent organization;
 - e) One current high school pupil;
 - f) Two representatives of local law enforcement agencies, one from a rural community;
 - g) Two representatives of local fire agencies, one of whom is from a rural community;
 - h) One member of a school district central office with expertise in school safety; and
 - i) One representative of a school district holding a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential.
- 3) Requires the workgroup to review existing comprehensive school safety plans and make recommendations on the development and approval process for and the required elements of a comprehensive school safety plan, including defining the goals and purposes of a safety plan, reviewing the required elements of a plan, and making recommendations on all of the following:
 - a) Improvements to the structure, organization, and layout of a plan to ensure it captures critical elements and is accessible and useful for schoolsite staff and the community, including parents and law enforcement;
 - b) Improvements to the local development and approval process to ensure that it is transparent and includes sufficient opportunity for input from stakeholders; and

- c) Procedures for the addition or deletion of elements of a plan to ensure continued cohesion and accessibility.
- 4) Requires the SPI to submit a report on the recommendations of the workgroup to the Legislature and the Department of Finance by July 1, 2027.
- 5) Authorizes the California Department of Education (CDE) to enter into a contract with a nongovernmental entity to fulfill the requirements of this section and authorizes a contracted nongovernmental entity to subcontract as necessary.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires each school district or county office of education (COE) to be responsible for the overall development of all comprehensive school safety plans for its schools operating kindergarten or any of grades 1 through 12. (Education Code (EC) 32281)
- 2) Exempts small school districts with fewer than 2,501 students from the requirement to develop a comprehensive school safety plan for each school if the district develops a districtwide comprehensive school safety plan applicable to each schoolsite. (EC 32281)
- 3) Requires the schoolsite council or a school safety planning committee to be responsible for developing the comprehensive school safety plan in consultation with representatives from law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and other first responder entities, and requires that the comprehensive school safety plan be shared with law enforcement, the fire department, and other first responder entities. (EC 32281)
- 4) Requires each school to adopt its school safety plan by March 1 and review and update its plan annually by March 1. Each school is required to annually report, in July, on the status of its school safety plan, including a description of key elements of the plan, in the annual school accountability report card (SARC). (EC 32286)
- 5) Specifies that the comprehensive school safety plan must include:
 - a) An assessment of the current status of school crime committed on school campuses and at school-related functions;
 - b) Identification of appropriate strategies and programs to provide or maintain a high level of school safety;
 - c) Child abuse reporting procedures;
 - d) Disaster procedures, including adaptations for pupils with disabilities;
 - e) An earthquake emergency procedure system;
 - f) Accommodations related to relevant federal disability laws; a requirement that the annual evaluation of plans ensure appropriate adaptations; and allow parents and others to bring a concern about a student's safety to the principal;

- g) Policies regarding pupils who commit specified acts that would lead to suspension or expulsion;
 - h) Procedures to notify teachers of dangerous pupils;
 - i) A discrimination and harassment policy;
 - j) Any schoolwide dress code;
 - k) Procedures for safe ingress and egress of pupils, parents, and school employees to and from school;
 - l) A safe and orderly environment conducive to learning;
 - m) Rules and procedures on school discipline;
 - n) Procedures for conducting tactical responses to criminal incidents, including procedures related to individuals with guns on school campuses and at school-related functions;
 - o) Procedures to assess and respond to reports of any dangerous, violent, or unlawful activity that is being conducted or threatened to be conducted at the school, at an activity sponsored by the school, or on a school bus serving the school;
 - p) Accommodations for students with special needs in case of emergency;
 - q) Procedures related to severe fires, including a communication, refuge, and evacuation plan;
 - r) Procedures to respond to incidents involving an individual experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest or a similar life-threatening medical emergency while on school grounds;
 - s) A protocol for responding to a student suffering from an opioid overdose. (EC 32282)
 - t) Beginning July 1, 2025, an instructional continuity plan to establish communication with pupils and their families and provide instruction to pupils when in-person instruction is disrupted due to an emergency, including procedures for pupil engagement and a plan to provide access to in-person instruction or remote instruction, as soon as practicable; and
 - u) Commencing with the 2026–27 fiscal year, establishing a procedure to identify appropriate refuge shelter for all pupils and staff to be used in the event of an evacuation order in the event of a fire. Also requires each public school serving more than 50 pupils that is in a high or very high fire hazard severity zone to coordinate the procedure with the operational area having jurisdiction within the school’s boundaries. (EC 32282)
- 6) Requires the comprehensive school safety plan to be evaluated at least once a year. (EC 32282)
- 7) Encourages that, as school safety plans are reviewed, plans be updated to include clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals, community

intervention professionals, school counselors, school resource officers, and police officers on school campuses if the school district uses these people. (EC 32282.1)

- 8) Authorizes the portions of a school safety plan that include tactical responses to criminal incidents to be developed by school district or COE administrators in consultation with law enforcement officials and with a representative of an exclusive bargaining unit of school district or COE employees if they choose to participate. Authorizes the school district or COE to elect not to disclose those portions of the comprehensive school safety plan that include tactical responses to criminal incidents. (EC 32281)
- 9) Defines “tactical responses to criminal incidents” as steps taken to safeguard pupils and staff, to secure the affected school premises, and to apprehend the criminal perpetrators. (EC 32281)
- 10) Prohibits an LEA, COE, or charter school from conducting high-intensity active shooter drills and requires an LEA, COE, or charter school to use a trauma-informed approach in the design and execution of any drill, in addition to requiring the CDE to curate and post on its website best practices pertaining to school shooter or other armed assailant drills on or before June 15, 2025. (EC 32282)
- 11) Encourages public schools, including charter schools, with an enrollment of 100 pupils or more, on or before July 1, 2030, to implement a web-based or app-based school safety program that includes specified parameters, including remote access to schoolsites' surveillance systems. (EC 32280.5)
- 12) Requires the petition to establish a charter school to include the development of a school safety plan with specified safety topics aligned with the requirements for a school district's comprehensive school safety plan. (EC 47605 and 47605.5)
- 13) Requires the CDE to collect and LEAs to provide data pertaining to lockdown or multi-option response drills conducted at schoolsites, and for the CDE to provide a report to the Legislature by November 1, 2021, of the findings and recommendations from the study. (EC 32289.5)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

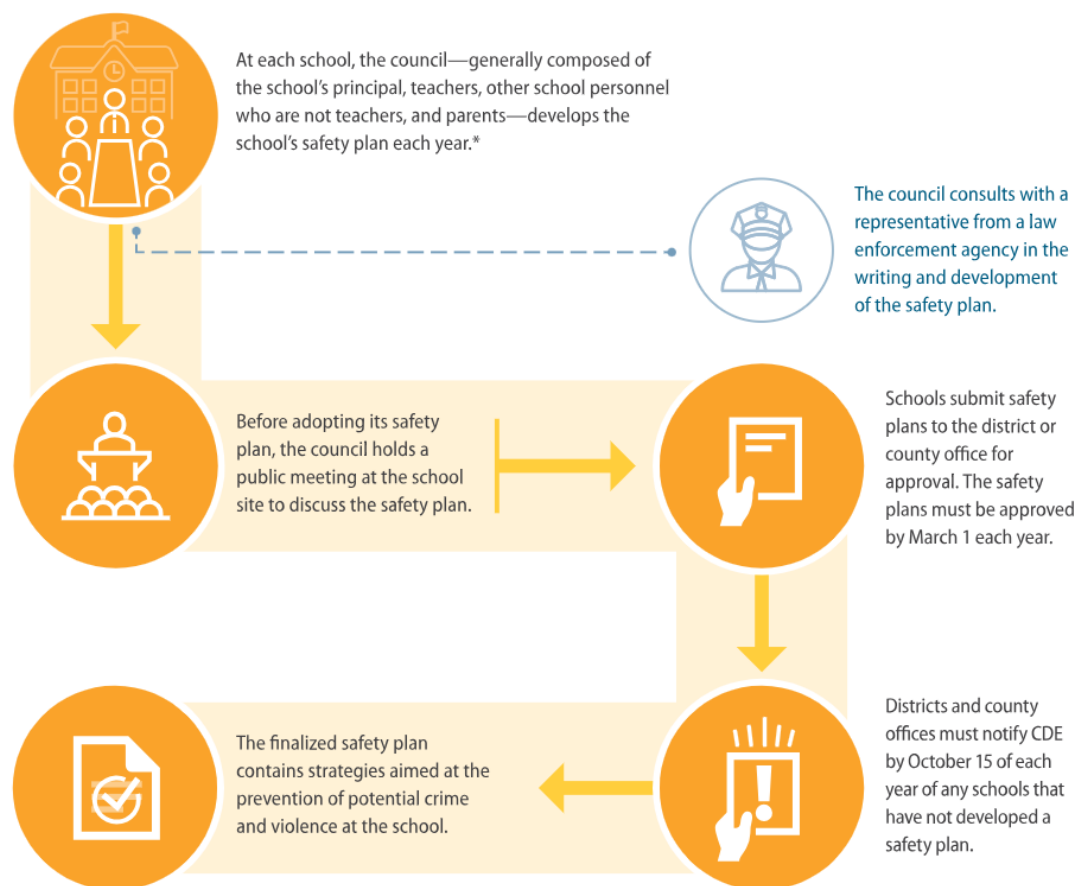
COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Schools are responsible for creating learning environments that are safe and secure for students, staff, and visitors. Schools must be prepared to respond to emergencies, including natural and man-made hazards, and strive to prevent violence and behaviors that undermine safety and security. Following the addition of multiple new requirements for a comprehensive school safety plan in recent years, there is a need to have experts review the requirements, conduct a thorough assessment, and make recommendations on how to improve and update the plans while maintaining those elements critical to school safety.”

School safety plans as a key component of school safety. Comprehensive school safety plans are a key component of school safety and are required by state law. Safety plans are a collection of procedures for schools to use in the event of an emergency, as well as policies to promote a

safe learning environment. Each school district and COE is responsible for the overall development of all safety plans for its schools that operate kindergarten or any grades 1 through 12. A charter school's petition is required to include the development of a school safety plan which largely mirrors the requirements for the school district and COE plans. The comprehensive school safety plan is developed by the schoolsite council or a safety committee as shown in the figure below.

Figure 3
State Law Requires Public Schools to Follow a Multistep Process to Develop a Safety Plan



Source: California State Auditor, 2016

State auditor identifies need for schools and the state to do more to ensure that school safety plans help protect students and staff during emergencies. The California State Auditor (CSA) released a report on School Violence Prevention in 2016. The report notes:

The California Constitution guarantees California children the right to attend public schools that are safe, secure, and peaceful. The educational institutions of California, such as the CDE, public school districts, COEs, and the schools themselves are responsible for creating safe and secure learning environments. To keep children safe, schools must be prepared to respond to a range of challenges, including natural disasters, such as earthquakes. Further, some schools have procedures for dealing with man-made hazards, such as bomb threats and chemical spills and behavior issues, such as bullying. Recent events have highlighted the

challenges schools face preparing for and responding to incidents of school violence, including active shootings.

The 2016 audit found that many safety plans they examined failed to comply with state law, including missing required procedures meant to protect students and staff. The audit also found that school districts and COEs had failed to ensure that schools are complying with safety plan requirements. This suggests that schools would be relying on insufficient or nonexistent safety plans and therefore, likely to face inadequate emergency responses. The audit also pointed to deficiencies at the state level, suggesting that statewide guidance and oversight was inadequate to ensure the safety and security of students and staff.

CDE required to post best practices for reviewing and approving school safety plans. In addition to a requirement to include new content and procedures in comprehensive school safety plans, AB 1747 (Rodriguez) Chapter 806, Statutes of 2018, required the CDE to develop and post on its website best practices for reviewing and approving school safety plans. Among other resources, the CDE developed and posted a Compliance Tool for a Comprehensive School Safety Plan which includes more than 30 items to be considered. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether the multitude of requirements to be included in the content and related procedures of the comprehensive school safety plans required for California public schools have led to documents that are unwieldy and that may compromise school safety.

Key elements of school safety. SchoolSafety.gov, a collaborative, interagency website created by the federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators, identifies the foundational elements of school safety as:

- **Designated staff** means an individual or group of individuals responsible for emergency management and effective implementation of safety and security policies, programs, directives, and training within their district or school;
- **Reporting systems** allow members of the school community to share concerns regarding student and school safety and student wellness. Mechanisms for reporting range from systems that encourage reporting information to a trusted adult at school to more formal systems with anonymous reporting capabilities, like tip lines;
- **Emergency operations plan** is a document that describes the actions students, teachers, and school staff should take before, during, and after emergency events;
- **Staff training** familiarizes staff with emergency policies and procedures, their role during an emergency, and how to train students;
- **Exercises and drills** provide a low-risk environment to test capabilities and familiarize staff, faculty, students, and community partners with their roles and responsibilities in the school's Emergency Operations Plan;
- **School climate** reflects how members of the school community experience the school, including interpersonal relationships, teacher and staff practices, and the physical environment. School climate includes factors that serve as conditions for learning and that support physical and emotional safety, connection, support, and engagement;

- **Threat assessment** is the process of identifying, assessing, and managing individuals of concern, including students or staff. A threat assessment team is a group of trained, multidisciplinary school personnel that are tasked with early identification and intervention with at-risk students and staff;
- **Site assessment** examines the safety, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of school buildings and grounds. Critical aspects of an assessment include a review of building access and egress control measures, visibility around the exterior of the building, structural integrity of the building, and emergency vehicle access;
- **Student training** is training that's developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and designed for a student's specific grade level. Training may include presentations, seminars, instructional training, or informal discussions; and
- **Recovery plans** make up a section of a school's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and are tailored to a school's facilities, population, and geographical area. The EOP planning team should develop plans for academic, physical, and fiscal, recovery. They should also develop plans for psychological and emotional recovery, like social, emotional, and behavioral recovery. Recovery plans describe what happens in the hours, days, weeks, and months after an incident occurs.

Increasing incidence of violent incidents on K-12 school campuses. The U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) define a targeted attack or targeted violence as an attack that was planned for days, weeks, or months, serves a purpose, and seeks to accomplish objectives set by the attacker. Prior to 1998, targeted attacks were rare in the U.S. Over the last 20 years, almost all targeted attacks at schools have been perpetrated by students or former students. (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Report, 2019).

Since April 20, 1999, when two high school students killed 12 students and 1 teacher and wounded 23 others before committing suicide at Columbine High School in Colorado, school safety has been a major concern in schools across the country. Since then, more shootings have taken place at schoolsites, including Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut in 2012, in which 26 students and educators were killed; the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida with 17 casualties; and the Uvalde, Texas school shooting in 2022, in which 19 children and 2 adults were killed.

The K-12 School Shooting Database, maintained by the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School, documents when a gun is brandished, is fired, or a bullet hits school property for any reason. The database has tracked the number of times a gun is fired or brandished with intent at a K-12 school or when a bullet hits a school property since 1970. The number of such incidents has increased drastically in recent years from less than 50 in 2000 to 349 in 2023 and 331 in 2024.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics:

- During the 2019–20 school year, 77% of public schools recorded that one or more incidents of crime had taken place, amounting to 1.4 million incidents. This translates to a rate of 29 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled in 2019–20;
- In 2019–20, 47% of schools reported one or more incidents of crime to sworn law enforcement, amounting to 482,400 incidents, or 10 incidents per 1,000 students enrolled;
- In 2019, about 5% of students ages 12–18 reported that they had been afraid of an attack or harm at school during the school year;
- In 2021–22, the number of school shootings with casualties (188) was more than twice as high as the next highest number of documented shootings (93), which was documented the year before in 2020–21; and
- In 2021–22, of the 188 school shootings with casualties, there were 57 school shootings with deaths and 131 with injuries.

Responding to threats of school violence. Numerous commissions have been established in response to school shootings and have developed recommendations to prevent and/or respond to such incidents. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission recommendations include the following:

- Interoperable communication to facilitate rapid deployment of first responders;
- Implementing programs to develop a safe school culture, including threat assessment teams and an anonymous tip telephone line;
- Information related to juveniles should be shared among law enforcement, courts, probation, schools, social services and mental health agencies;
- Programs aimed at peer reporting should be implemented as peers are the most likely source of information;
- Gun violence by youth often involves weapons from home, and home security for weapons should be strengthened;
- Increasing background checks related to firearm purchase and ownership as well as mandatory registration of firearms;
- A statewide common database that includes school floor plans should be developed and accessible to planners and first responders; and
- Classroom and safe-haven areas that lock from the inside. (Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Report, 2019)

Alternative methods of improving school safety. According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), “A rise in the number of school shootings over time has driven increasing attention to

school safety. However, school shootings are not the only physical safety threat students may encounter at school. Other types of violence include sexual assault, robbery, physical attack or fights, and threats of physical attack (with or without a weapon). In addition to immediate physical harms, school violence can have long-lasting effects that undermine students' engagement and mental health. It can also increase drug use and risk of suicide. Although there is widespread agreement that all children and youth deserve a safe and healthy school environment, there is significant debate about how best to promote student safety.” (DePaoli, 2023)

The LPI report identifies two common approaches to improving school safety: increasing physical security and building supportive school communities. Physical security strategies that may be utilized include controlling access to the building and requiring badges for staff and visitors, as well as security cameras, metal detectors, and the deployment of school resource officers (SROs). There is growing interest in improving school safety through building supportive school communities to protect against school violence, including mental health supports, social and emotional learning programs, restorative practices, and structures that support positive relationships within schools. LPI reports that research supports the use of these approaches to support school safety.

Arguments in support. The California Association of School Police Chiefs and other law enforcement organizations write “Schools have been increasingly affected by safety issues that were not addressed when safety plans were first adopted, such as increased incidences of active school shooters, the opioid crisis, wildfires and other natural disasters. The Legislature has responded to emerging safety issues by requiring schools to be prepared to respond. These new requirements, while critical, have been imposed without a formal review of the best way to ensure school safety plans retain their focus. In many cases, these safety plans have become unwieldy documents focused more on compliance with statutory requirements than on the critical elements of ensuring the safety of students, staff, and the school facility.”

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:*

- 1) Remove the specificity of elementary and secondary schools for the school staff members and instead require the SPI to ensure that the workgroup, to the greatest extent possible, includes individuals employed in both elementary and secondary schools and that at least one educator has experience in working with pupils with exceptional needs.
- 2) Remove requirement for first responders from rural communities, and require the SPI to ensure the workgroup has representation from different geographic areas of the state, and a rural/urban balance.
- 3) Add a school nurse to the workgroup.
- 4) Authorize the workgroup to consult with outside experts in school safety.

Related legislation. AB 598 (Gipson) of the 2025-26 Session would establish the School Mapping Grant Program, under the administration of the Office of Emergency Services (OES), to provide one-time grants to local education agencies (LEAs) to contract with vendors for school mapping data, subject to an appropriation for this purpose.

AB 2887 (Mainschein) Chapter 419, Statutes of 2024, requires an LEA, county office of education (COE), and charter school to add to their comprehensive school safety plan, on or after July 1, 2025, procedures to respond to incidents involving an individual experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest or a similar life-threatening medical emergency while on school grounds.

AB 2968 (Connolly) Chapter 582, Statutes of 2024, requires, commencing in the 2026-27 fiscal year, LEAs in high or very high fire severity zones to include in their comprehensive school safety plan procedures related to severe fires, including a communication, refuge, and evacuation plan.

AB 3262 (Mainschein) Chapter 19, Statutes of 2024, requires that when an automated external defibrillator (AED) is placed in a public or private school serving grades 6-12, the principal notify pupils, in addition to school staff, of the location of all AED units on the campus at least annually.

AB 960 (Mathis) Chapter 528, Statutes of 2024, encourages public schools, including charter schools, with an enrollment of 100 pupils or more, on or before July 1, 2030, to implement a web-based or app-based school safety program that includes specified parameters, including remote access to schoolsites' surveillance systems.

SB 671 (Portantino) Chapter 626, Statutes of 2023, requires an LEA, COE, and charter school safety plans to include procedures to assess and respond to reports of any dangerous, violent, or unlawful activity that is being conducted or threatened to be conducted at the school, at an activity sponsored by the school, or on a school bus serving the school.

SB 323 (Portantino) Chapter 599, Statutes of 2023, requires that comprehensive school safety plans address accommodations related to relevant federal disability laws; (2) requires that the annual evaluation of those plans ensure appropriate adaptations; and (3) authorizes parents and others to bring a concern about a student's safety to the principal.

AB 1858 (Ward) Chapter 530, Statutes of 2024, prohibits an LEA, COE, or charter school from conducting high-intensity active shooter drills and requires an LEA, COE, or charter school to use a trauma-informed approach in the design and execution of any drill, in addition to requiring the CDE to curate and post on its website best practices pertaining to school shooter or other armed assailant drills on or before June 15, 2025.

AB 2565 (McCarty) Chapter 531, Statutes of 2024, requires a school district, COE, or charter school making an addition, alteration, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or retrofit of a school building, to install interior locks on each door of any room with an occupancy of five or more persons in that school building, contingent upon an appropriation.

AB 2816 (Gipson) of the 2023-24 Session would have established the School Mapping Data Grant Program, under the administration of the Office of Emergency Services (OES), to provide one-time grants to participating LEAs to enter into contracts with qualified vendors providing school mapping data for purposes of assisting public safety agencies in efficiently responding to on-campus emergencies at schools. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 541 (Bates), Chapter 786, Statutes of 2019, requires the CDE to collect, and LEAs to provide, data pertaining to lockdown or multi-option response drills conducted at schoolsites within school districts, COEs, and charter schools serving students in kindergarten or grades 1 to

12 and requires the CDE to submit a report to the Legislature by November 1, 2021, relative to that data.

AB 2009 (Mainschein) Chapter 646, Statutes of 2018, requires a school district or charter school that elects to offer any interscholastic athletic program to ensure that there is a written emergency action plan in place and acquire at least one AED for each school for the purpose of emergency care in the event of cardiac arrest and other related medical emergencies. Clarifies that existing law providing conditional liability protections to those acquiring or using these AEDs would apply.

AB 1747 (Rodriguez), Chapter 806, Statutes of 2018, requires charter schools to develop a school safety plan, including procedures for conducting tactical responses to criminal incidents; requires comprehensive school safety plans to include procedures for conducting tactical responses to criminal incidents; increases the CDE's responsibilities relating to school safety plans; and requires schoolsite councils to also consult with the fire department and other first responder entities in the writing and development of the comprehensive school safety plan.

AB 3205 (O'Donnell), Chapter 401, Statutes of 2018, requires a school district seeking state school facilities bond funds to include, as part of a modernization project, locks that allow doors to classrooms and any room with an occupancy of five or more persons to be locked from the inside of the room.

AB 58 (Rodriguez) of the 2015-16 Session would have made each COE the entity responsible for the overall development of all comprehensive school safety plans and required school safety plans to include procedures in response to individuals with guns on school campuses. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 1639 (Mainschein) Chapter 792, Statutes of 2016, requires the CDE to make available specified guidelines and materials on sudden cardiac arrest; requires students and parents to sign informational materials before athletic participation; requires training of coaches; and sets requirements for action in the event a pupil experiences specified symptoms.

AB 1271 (Bonta) Chapter 794, Statutes of 2014, encourages the guidelines in a school safety plan for the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals, community intervention professionals, school counselors, school resource officers, and police officers on school campuses to include protocols to address the mental health care of pupils who have witnessed a violent act at any time, including, but not limited to, any of the following: while on school grounds; while going to or coming from school; during a lunch period whether on or off campus; and, during, or while going to or coming from, a school-sponsored activity.

AB 549 (Jones-Sawyer), Chapter 422, Statutes of 2013, encourages all school safety plans, to the extent that resources are available, to include clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of mental health professionals, community intervention professionals, school counselors, school resource officers, and police officers on school campus, if the school district uses these people.

AB 680 (Block), Chapter 438, Statutes of 2011, authorizes a school district or COE, in consultation with law enforcement officials, to choose not to have its schoolsite council develop and write those portions of its comprehensive school safety plan that include tactical responses to criminal incidents that may result in death or serious bodily injury at the schoolsite and

authorizes, instead, school district and COE administrators to write those portions of the school safety plan.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda County Office of Education
Association of California School Administrators
California Association of School Police Chiefs
California Coalition of School Safety Professionals
California School Nurses Organization
California State PTA
CFT - a Union of Educators & Classified Professionals
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
United Administrators of Southern California

Opposition

None on file

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