



Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 7, 2014

TO: The Honorable Members of the Delaware General Assembly

FROM: Terri Hancharick, Chairperson
GACEC

RE: **House Bill No. 33 (Public School Alarm Systems)**

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) has reviewed House Bill No. 33 addressing public school alarm systems. The legislation is designed to improve school safety by requiring the installation and maintenance of an alarm system in each public school capable of notifying law enforcement of an emergency that can be activated from at least one location in each school. According to a June 13, 2013 article, the legislation is supported by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. The Secretary noted that "many (schools) have a security system in place, which would make installation and maintenance relatively inexpensive." The article also describes the observations by the prime sponsor that the alarm system could be activated based on a range of events, including shootings, fights, and confrontations. The amendments suggest some indecision on whether the alarms must be silent and whether they must be directly linked to law enforcement. House Amendment No. 1 would allow schools to decide if alarms would be silent and directly linked to law enforcement. House Amendment No. 2 would require alarms to be silent but not necessarily directly linked to law enforcement. The GACEC **endorses the concept** of House Bill No. 33. The alarm system would enhance timely law enforcement response to school emergencies.

The fiscal note on this legislation is modest. Installation would cost from \$110,500 to \$331,500 in State funds and monitoring is projected to annually cost public schools \$79, 560, i.e., \$30/month per building times 221 buildings. This cost compares favorably with other pending legislation (House Bill No. 221) which would result in retrofitting classroom doors so they may be locked from both inside and outside the classroom. The fiscal note on that initiative is \$3,994,500, more than 10 times the cost of installation of the alarm systems.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our endorsement of the concept of House Bill No. 33. Please feel free to contact me or Wendy Strauss should you have questions or concerns.