

**Testimony of Brett Bontrager
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**Protecting Students and Teachers: A Discussion on School Safety
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Miller, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical issue of school safety. My name is Brett Bontrager. I am the Senior Vice President and Group Executive of Stanley Security Solutions, which is a division of Stanley Black & Decker.

Stanley Security Solutions is headquartered in Indianapolis – in Congresswoman Brooks' congressional district. While many of you know Stanley Black & Decker for its construction and do-it-yourself products, our company has also been in the security business for many decades.

It is because of this expertise, decades of school experience and the proximity of our world headquarters in Connecticut in relation to the tragedy in Newtown that led us to be able to immediately play a role in helping the students and faculty of Sandy Hook. After the decision was made by the town to move the students to a decommissioned school, Chalk Hill, two tenured employees from our team were called in to perform a comprehensive security survey and determine what was needed in the building to allow the students to move in and be safe. Our team worked through the holidays to make sure that the Chalk Hill school building was ready for the children when they returned to school to provide a safe and secure environment for the students, parents and faculty.

While there is certainly some information on websites and in other literature, and products do exist and are on the market to secure our nation's schools, we have not been able to find in our research a website or other single source of information that comprehensively integrates all of the security needs together. For school administrators, board of education members and superintendents, the daily challenges that come with educating our children and running a school district are all-consuming. Now, in the wake of the Newtown tragedy, parents want these same officials to become experts in security. As we all know security measures and practices are designed to slow down an intruder for, every moment that you can delay or slow down an intruder to allow time for law enforcement to arrive, can save countless lives, but understanding the right solutions and the overall task is overwhelming.

A good starting point is to ask the basic question: What is school safety? Certainly, no single lock or system is the answer. Instead, a comprehensive, integrated security package and long-term roadmap should be designed and implemented, which would take into account the unique physical nature of each school. Each school stands on its own geographic footprint and has unique physical characteristics. This necessitates that prior to the installation of any security system each school district should ensure that its school buildings and grounds undergo a site evaluation, a risk assessment and a long-term, comprehensive security roadmap is developed.

Upon completion of the site evaluation and risk assessment, decisions must then be made on the level of security needed. By levels of security I am referring to security products that range from essential hardware and mechanical access equipment, such as door hardware which includes intruder locks and master key systems, to wireless situational awareness monitoring, and every solution in between.

A school can add basic hardware changes, blast and ballistic resistant doors, electronic access control or monitoring. Each district can work within their own specific needs, considering their budget as well as the local rules and regulations.

One clear trend that security providers see is the strong need to tie mass notification via an intercom system to a schools' access control, intrusion monitoring system and security cameras. This allows for coordination and visibility for response teams both inside the school as well as from local law enforcement or fire personnel in the case of an emergency. Lack of integration with the local first responder team can be a critical flaw in the school security process.

Now that I've walked you through the theoretical and general aspects of school safety, I'd like to provide the Committee with some specific examples of schools across the country where we have worked with the administration to customize the best solutions for their needs as well as explain the components of those systems. You will quickly see that a one-size, fits-all approach is neither practical nor recommended.

- One of the best examples I can provide is the work that was done with one of the largest school districts in Louisiana which included 6,000 employees, 42,000 students from pre-K to 12th grade and 66 different schools. The district encompasses urban centers, suburban neighborhoods, rural towns and communities.

In reviewing efficiencies and cost saving measures, the district determined that several of their high school campus locations were underutilized. It was decided that to fully utilize their available space and to reduce overhead costs, each facility would integrate 7th and 8th graders. This idea however, did not come without security challenges. It was important that each of these locations be able to isolate or limit the interaction between younger and older students. The school facilities on average were 60 years old and not built with security in mind. There were too many ways that unauthorized individuals could enter and leave. Every school presented its own set of challenges, multi-level, construction issues, etc.

- A second example is of a school district not far from where we are sitting today in a suburban community where the school enrollment of approximately 27,000 is divided amongst five high schools, eight middle schools and seventeen elementary schools. The school division had experienced rapid growth and began to research higher levels of student safety in the classroom. The Assistant Superintendent for Facilities contacted us to help develop solutions to enhance security campus-wide and system-wide and we worked closely with the school officials to survey all properties, identify any deficiencies, enhance security overall and pull together a 5-year plan to make it all happen. It was important to the schools that they increase the ability to control all traffic into and out of their facilities as the building exteriors were still being secured with keys and access was given to a large number of individuals. Ultimately the schools ended up implementing a standardized template for key control and utilization by establishing a key hierarchy throughout the different school levels.

This hearing has started what we think should be a continued national conversation on school security and safety that includes experts from the field and school officials in order to learn the best ways to protect our schools.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I applaud you and the Committee for taking a leadership role on the critical issue of school safety. I know we can all agree that keeping our children safe in their schools is worth all of our time, all of our collective experience, and all of our wisdom. I am humbled that I might play a role in this effort.