

February 27, 2013

Testimony of Mo Canady, Executive Director, National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

Chairman Kline, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the National Association of School Resource Officers. It is my honor to serve as the Executive Director for this outstanding group of law enforcement and education professionals. NASRO is a not-for-profit association founded in 1991 with a solid commitment to our nation's youth. NASRO is comprised of school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators and school security and safety professionals working as partners to protect students, faculty and staff, and their school community. The "school resource officer" (SRO) refers to a commissioned law-enforcement officer selected, trained and assigned to protect and serve the education environment. I cannot emphasize enough how critical it is for officers to be *properly* selected and *properly* trained to function in the school environment. This is always a factor in the success or failure of the SRO program.

The SRO program is most effective when it is built on the foundation of interagency collaboration. There should always be a formal memorandum of understanding between the law enforcement agency and the school district. The role of the SRO should be based on the triad concept of school based policing. This encompasses the strategies of law enforcement, informal counseling and education. A typical day for an SRO may include traffic direction, problem-solving with a student or making a presentation on distracted driving to a classroom of high school students.

Relationship building is certainly an important factor in the success of an SRO program. The SRO must strive to build positive working relationships with the school administration. One way of helping to build these relationships can be through the SROs role on the school safety team. Properly trained SRO's are prepared to be a member of safety teams and can also take a leadership role in helping to develop teams where none exist.

I spent nearly half of my law enforcement career in school based-policing. It was without a doubt the most rewarding period of my career. It was more than just a job. It became my life's work. I developed positive relationships with administrators, faculty members, students and parents. I became an integral part of the Hoover City Schools District Crisis Team. By being a part of a school safety team, the SRO becomes fully engaged in crisis planning to include Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. SRO's can provide value to the written plans for a school district. They can also assist with campus site assessments as well as conducting safety drills.

The aspect of "Recovery" was not one that I had given a great deal of thought to during the early phase of my career in school-based law enforcement. It was not until the days following November 19, 2002 that it became clear to me the importance of the role that a school resource officer can play in the recovery portion of a critical incident. The unthinkable had happened at our largest high school. One student had taken the life of another in the hallway during the change of class periods.

This resulted in a very large crime scene that took some time to secure. The students had to remain in a modified lockdown for several hours. We all knew that this was putting quite a burden on teachers in particular. However, they did exactly what they were supposed to do, as they had been trained. The principal asked me to join him in a faculty meeting after the students were released. I took the opportunity to praise the staff for their good work. One of the reasons that faculty members were so well prepared for an incident such as this, was due to the schools commitment to maintaining a solid school safety team.

I believe that this faculty meeting was actually the beginning of the recovery process. Plans were developed for the next day. We thought that our most important job on November 20th would be to keep this from happening again. To keep weapons out of the school. To make sure that no retaliation occurred. While all of those things were important, it paled in comparison to the need of the student body to be comforted and reassured. The need for trusted and caring adults became the more important issue in this recovery process. The school resource officers were certainly still focused on security but we were most definitely more engaged in the mental and emotional recovery process. The reason for this is because we were much more than just a law enforcement presence. We were trusted adults and we helped to make a difference in the lives of children during the days prior to and most definitely following November 19, 2002.

Trained and committed police officers are well-suited to effectively protect and serve the school community. School resource officers contribute by ensuring a safe and secure campus, educating students about law-related topics, and mentoring students as informal counselors and role models. Over the last 23 years, the National Association of School Resource Officers has become the world leader in school based policing. We have trained thousands of officers based on the Triad model of school based policing and these officers are having a positive impact on the lives of children every day.