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For Immediate Release - Senator Joyce Waddell's House Committee Reviews School Safety

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Sent: Friday, March 23, 2018 9:05 AM



From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, March 23, 2018

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House Committee Reviews School Safety

Charlotte, NC – On March 21, the House Select Committee on School Safety discussed measures to make students safer in public schools following last month's mass school shooting in Parkland, Florida, which claimed 17 lives. The committee received input from school safety experts, mental health officials, a teacher, and some students. The committee focused on improving mental health services, school building security, and increasing funding for school resource officers.

North Carolina had 15 school or university shootings since 2013. Many school parents feel that there are not enough people or resources that effectively help students with social and emotional health needs. According to Jim Deni, the immediate past president of the North Carolina School Psychology Association, one in five students have mental or substance use issues; and 75 percent of those do not receive treatment. National standards recommend one school psychologist per 700 students in public schools. The current ratio is one to 2,100 students in the state. Governor Roy Cooper and some Democratic legislators suggested various gun control measures, such as raising the age to buy an assault rifle to 21, requiring background checks, and allowing judges to temporarily remove guns from someone considered dangerous.

According to a state report, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) intercepted 19 guns at school last year at three elementary schools and a selective middle school magnet. In 2006-07, there were 28 firearms reported in CMS. The number decreased beginning in 2008 but has risen the last two years. The State Bureau of Investigation cited data that legislation passed in 2013 provided \$7 million in matching funds for school districts to pay for law enforcement officers and \$2 million to install school panic alarms. Every public school now has floor plans designed for law enforcement to access during an emergency. The upcoming committee meetings may discuss arming teachers, retired law enforcement officers, or veterans to provide school security.

“It is disheartening to learn about the mass school shootings that took place in our nation. Students need access to quality mental health treatment. We need to pass common-sense legislation that will address gun reform by expanding background checks and raising the age for the purchase of assault weapons. We should fund the school systems throughout the state with more allocations for school counselors and psychologists, thus reducing the wide ratio of students being able to seek help and school officials offering early intervention. North Carolina teachers should be able to pride themselves by educating and nurturing students. No teacher, staff, or student should have to ponder if these tragic incidents will occur at their school. I look forward to continuing this discussion in the Senate,” said Senator Joyce Waddell.

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