**House Select Committee on School Safety**

Thursday, April 26, 2018, 1:30 p.m.

House Committee Room

Pocahontas Building, Richmond

**Quorum present:**

Speaker M. Kirkland Cox (Chair), Delegate Danny Marshall (Vice Chair), Delegate Steve Landes, Delegate S. Chris Jones, Delegate Tommy Wright, Delegate Rob Bell, Delegate Todd Gilbert, Delegate Chris Peace, Delegate Barry Knight, Delegate Israel O'Quinn, Delegate Nick Rush, Delegate Vivian Watts, Delegate Mark Sickles, Delegate David Toscano, Delegate Charniele Herring, Delegate Luke Torian, Delegate Paul Krizek, Delegate Steve Heretick, Delegate Mike Mullin, Delegate Jeff Bourne, and Delegate Schuyler VanValkenburg.

**Summary:**

The House Select Committee on School Safety (Committee) held its inaugural meeting on Thursday, April 26, 2018, at 1:30 p.m. in the House Committee Room in the Pocahontas Building in Richmond. A quorum was present. The meeting agenda consisted of nine items:

*1. Call to Order; Chairman's Remarks.*

Chairman Cox opened the meeting by explaining that he carefully selected the members of the Committee for their diverse experience in order to facilitate a team-oriented and consensus-driven approach to studying and improving school safety in the Commonwealth.

*2. Vice Chairman's Remarks.*

Vice Chairman Marshall noted that while the Commonwealth is already doing a great deal to ensure the safety of its public elementary and secondary schools, the Committee presents a real opportunity to identify small steps that can lead to meaningful reform and improvement in school safety. He noted that the consensus-driven process will consist of at least three to four meetings and will culminate in a final report with legislative recommendations.

*3. Overview of Subcommittees.*

Chairman Cox announced the formation of three subcommittees that will meet between the June and September meetings of the Committee and make recommendations to the Committee in specific subject matter areas: a seven-member Infrastructure & Security Subcommittee (Delegate Rush, Chair), a nine-member Student Behavior & Intervention Subcommittee (Delegate Landes, Chair), and a seven-member Prevention & Response Protocol Subcommittee (Delegate Peace, Chair; Delegate Marshall, ex officio member).

*4. Overview of Select Committee Website - https:schoolsafety.virginia.gov.*

Vice Chairman Marshall invited Committee Clerk Cheryl Wilson to the podium to display the Committee website and to perform a tutorial of the website's key feature, a public comment tab via which citizens of the Commonwealth can submit written comments to the Committee.

*5. Presentation on Governor Bob McDonnell's School Safety Task Force.*

Charles Quagliato, Senior Attorney at the Division of Legislative Services, updated the Committee on the recommendations of a School Safety Task Force (Task Force) convened by Governor Bob McDonnell in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012.

The Task Force consisted of a wide variety of members, including law-enforcement personnel, teachers, school counselors, school administrators, first responders, parents, and students. Members were appointed to three work groups: Education, Mental Health, and Public Safety. The three work groups issued a total of 61 formal recommendations. The Education Subcommittee issued eight formal recommendations, of which four were fully implemented, two were partially implemented, and two applied exclusively to higher education. The Mental Health work group issued five recommendations, all of which were fully implemented. The Public Safety work group issued 48 formal recommendations, of which 20 were fully implemented, three were partially implemented, 17 were not implemented, one did not necessitate implementation, and seven applied exclusively to higher education.

*6. Presentation on Current Status of Law in Virginia.*

Donna P. Michaelis, Manager, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety (VCSCS), Division of Law Enforcement, Department of Criminal Justice Services, updated the Committee on (i) the history of the school safety law in the Commonwealth, (ii) the role of school resource officers and school security officers in public elementary and secondary schools and funding available for such positions, (iii) the threat assessment process in public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth, and (iv) the role of VCSCS, including data collection, training and conferences, the provision of resources, and the formation of partnerships. Ms. Michaelis also highlighted some challenges that VCSCS faces, including the need to secure grant funding to sustain many of its functions and the ongoing need to conduct training due to turnover in staff in local school divisions. Ms. Michaelis also emphasized that Virginia is considered a national leader in school safety practices, especially in the area of threat assessment.

*7. Utilization of Third-Party Experts.*

Chairman Cox encouraged subcommittee chairmen to determine if, how, and when experts from fields such as academia, industry, and law enforcement may be able to assist the subcommittees in understanding the issues and formulating recommendations relating to school safety.

*8. Discussion.*

Several committee members shared their viewpoints about potential topics for further discussion, including uniform school entry systems, the employment of behavioral interventionists and school counselors, the role of social media, the mental health aspect of school safety, the problem of bullying, and the need to personally engage students and address community problems that enter public schools.

Several members have visited schools and engaged with their local communities in a variety of ways and several more plan to do so in the near future. Chairman Cox is seeking to coordinate a school visit in conjunction with the next Committee meeting.

*9. Other Business; Next Meeting; Adjournment.*

The Committee adjourned to reconvene on a date in late June to be subsequently determined.

An archived video of the full meeting and power point presentations for agenda items 5 and 6 can be found at the following link: http://studies.virginiageneralassembly.gov/meetings/570.