



Chairwoman Boucher, Chairman Fleishmann, and members of the School Safety working group – my name is Dr. David Levinson, and I am here in my capacity as the Vice President for Community Colleges at the Board of Regents for Higher Education. In addition to my role there, I am also the President of Norwalk Community College.

The Board of Regents oversees 12 community colleges, four state universities and our state's online institution, Charter Oak State College. When I was asked to appear before this working group, I was told that it was to provide a better perspective of the safety and security measures already undertaken at our community colleges, as well as to discuss those measures that we may need to address going forward. Our 12 community colleges are located in many different settings, each of which presents their own unique challenges in terms of safety and security. Gateway, Capital and Housatonic, for example, are in the heart of downtown New Haven, Hartford, and Bridgeport, respectively. Northwestern Connecticut in Winsted and Quinebaug Valley in Danielson are more rural campuses. A campus like my own, in Norwalk, and those at Naugatuck Valley and Middlesex, are located in cities of various sizes, but are set apart from the busier downtown areas and have more of a traditional campus feel to them.

But if the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has underscored any one issue, it is that school safety and security must be a top priority on every campus in our state, regardless of its size, geographic location, or number of students attending the institution. We are all Virginia

Tech, Lone Star College and Sandy Hook Elementary School. School safety is not just about protecting our students from shootings – it is about creating a secure environment – from any number of dangers which may present themselves internally or externally – in which students can thrive and succeed every single day. To discuss school safety and security without addressing the role mental health and other guidance services must play in this equation is to ignore ways in which we may be able to help address outstanding issues before they become a larger problem.

Across our community college campuses, it is common to hold shelter-in-place drills, fire drills and lock-down drills. It is not as common to hold active shooter drills. In addition, the kind of security personnel varies campus-by-campus across the community colleges. Some campuses contract out to a private security firm and some employ their own POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training) Officers. One campus has armed officers, but the remaining community college campuses do not, and rely instead upon their local police department to assist them should an event require additional support.

When the Board of Regents was formed in 2011, it was clear that safety and security procedures across all 17 of our campuses were not uniform, nor was there any clear policy that explained the expectations of the former boards when it came to safety and security on campuses. Late last year, Vice President for the State Universities, Elsa Nunez, and I, discussed with the Chairwoman of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents, the idea of retaining a public safety consulting firm to help put together an environmental scan

of the policies, procedure, and practices across our 17 institutions, to allow the Regents to be better informed as we move forward. We are hoping to move forward with this project immediately.

I would like to add one final note before I'm happy to take any questions you may have. As I mentioned before, we cannot ignore the role that mental health and other guidance services must play in a holistic approach to school safety and security. We at the colleges and I know the universities, too, struggle with being able to provide our students with the guidance and mental health counselors they deserve. We were hopeful that we would be able to add some more counselors to the campuses this year, but because of the budgetary constraints, those plans are on hold for the time being.

I know I speak for all of my colleague presidents when I say that the safety and security of our students and our campuses are truly the things that keep us up at night. The tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School has illustrated so clearly, right in our own backyard, that no one is immune.

Thank you.