



San Diego County Office of Education Main Campus
6401 Linda Vista Road, San Diego, CA 92111
858-292-3500 | www.sdcoe.net

March 1, 2019

The Honorable Brian Babin, U.S. Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
316 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: House of Representatives 838 (Babin) – Support

Dear Congressman Babin,

As San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, I am pleased to support your efforts outlined in H.R. 838, the Threat Assessment, Prevention, and Safety (TAPS) Act of 2018.

San Diego County is home to 710 schools across 42 school districts as well as 129 charter schools. Collectively, these schools serve 508,169 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Those half-million students and their families are counting on schools and local law enforcement to work together to make our campuses safe places, but we cannot do it alone.

Local school districts, with support from the San Diego County Office of Education and law enforcement partners, have used what was learned from previous school shootings in our region to implement strategies aimed at preventing this type of attack from happening again. We are collaborating on four areas — prevention, assessment and intervention, emergency procedures, and recovery — to prepare schools for this type of threat.

H.R. 838 and S265 would be a valuable tool in our efforts. The TAPS Act will provide states the training, resources, and support needed to implement community-based, multidisciplinary threat assessment and management units; those resources would also be extremely useful to schools. The Act recognizes that threat assessment and management processes must become part of the culture and fabric of contemporary law enforcement.

By standardizing and providing a threat assessment and management process across the federal government, the TAPS Act would require the federal government to do what schools are doing: developing and implementing programs and resources to help people recognize the warning signs that might precede a violent event and report safety concerns. Just as San Diego County schools have created multidisciplinary, school-based teams to assess threats and safety concerns as they are reported, so, too, would the federal government.

Our teachers and students know all too well what it's like to have lives brutally and unexpectedly ended in a deadly school shooting. From a sniper attack at Cleveland Elementary in 1979 to tragedies at Santana and Granite Hills high schools in 2001 and a 2010 shooting at Kelly Elementary, our region has confronted this evil, grieved for lost loved ones, and emerged stronger and wiser. We know better than many communities the importance of acting now and working together to save lives through threat assessment and prevention.

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On behalf of the San Diego County Office of Education and the school community, thank you for authoring this legislative proposal.

If you have any questions, please contact Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Programs Dr. Rebecca Mendiola at 858-292-3637.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Gothold", written over a faint, illegible printed name.

Dr. Paul Gothold

San Diego County Superintendent of Schools