

WSPTA Testimony on SB 5317

1/30/19 JLOB SHR 1 1:30pm

(Testimony was shortened to fit 60-second time set by Chair; these are the full remarks)

Good afternoon, Chair Wellman. My name is Robin Zaback, speaking again on behalf of the Washington State PTA.

I am here to support Senate Bill 5317 as it aligns well with the legislative priority adopted at our Legislative Assembly in October to support emergency preparedness planning in schools.

The shooting incident at Freeman High School 2017 caused me to start learning about school safety. On my side of the state, I was serving as a PTA President and our PTA members were asking me about what our school was doing to keep students safe. I wanted to know! My school principal introduced me to our school's safe school plan, which was a work in progress as he was having to dedicate a lot of time and research to put it all together. And that conversation started me learning about the laws and RCWs and finding that while the mandate to create a safety plan is codified-- there is not much else in place. MORE IS NEEDED: more support, more guidance, more accountability, more funding.

SB 5317 includes those supports: school safety centers to serve as clearinghouses for best practices and support for creating individualized plans, facilitating partnerships and communication with key stakeholders; formation of a committee that looks at safety in a holistic way; and explicit inclusion of OSPI so they can better support all of these efforts and hold schools accountable. These are all huge steps in the right direction.

This bill addresses the various types of school safety drills, but a critical one is missing: a Parent/Student re-unification drill. Parents need to know what to do in a crisis as much as school staff and students so they can be helpful and not hurtful during times of crisis. The National Association of School Psychologists states, " A predetermined and practiced **reunification** process helps to ensure that **reunification** will not add to the anxiety and trauma of the crisis." We agree. Active shooter situations lead to chaos and parents will do whatever they can to reach their child or children. If they are prepared, have good communication and are trained they won't hinder first responders and make a traumatic situation worse.

Washington State PTA advocates for the safety and well-being of every child. We urge you to support Senate Bill 5317. Thank you.