COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Executive Order No. 56 *Revised 5/16/13*

Governor's Taskforce on School and Campus Safety

Importance of the Initiative

In the aftermath of the heartbreaking tragedy that devastated Newtown, Connecticut, and the nation, Virginians stand united behind the families and friends of those affected by the loss of so many innocent lives. Indeed, the similarities between this horrific attack and the tragic 2007 shootings at Virginia Tech have left many in the Commonwealth searching for understanding, solutions, and ideas on how to prevent such violence in our country.

The impact of this recent event is not confined to Connecticut. Nor is the grief and outrage confined to Colorado, Arizona, Virginia, or to any other state that shares the burden of grieving for innocent victims lost at the hands of a depraved gunman or group that inexplicably chooses to take human lives en masse in a school, on a campus, or in a public forum.

Public safety is a primary responsibility of government - whether it is at the federal, state, or local level. In the aftermath of the shocking and senseless shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, I have asked all local and state leaders that play a role in school or campus safety to review the procedures, plans, policies, and resources dedicated to the safety of students, faculty, and the public. We owe it to our children and young people to provide safe and secure learning environments, and the recent tragedy highlights the timeliness of conducting another comprehensive review. Accordingly, this past Monday, I announced the formation of a plan to review school safety at all levels, and to identify gaps and critical resource needs at the state, local, school division, and college/university levels to ensure that we are doing everything humanly possible to keep our children, young people, educators, and administrators safe while they are in the classroom and on our campuses.

Virginia has already put into place many significant measures to combat violence in schools and to promote a safe learning environment. Sections 22.1-279.8 and 9.1-184 of the *Code of Virginia* establish the Virginia Center for School Safety (VCSS) and set forth specific requirements for

training, crisis management, emergency response, and other preventative measures for situations that pose a threat of harm to students or school personnel. VCSS annually collects, analyzes, and publishes school safety data, including information from annual school safety audits. Moreover, the Department of Education regularly monitors data on violence and criminal acts in schools to identify those schools needing assistance to improve safety. Templates are provided for development of plans and technical assistance is available at the state level. We have also conducted extensive reviews of campus safety and our mental health system in 2007 and 2008 in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings, resulting in legislative reforms, administrative changes, and additional mental health funding. As Attorney General, I worked with Governor Kaine to develop these needed reforms. We have seen the devastating effects that an individual with criminal intent or mental health problems can have on our citizens. Though the majority of individuals with mental illness are more likely to be victims of violence than the perpetrators, we must improve our ability to minimize any risk of harm to oneself or others resulting from serious mental illness and utilize mental health services to prevent violence before danger arises. This is an area that cannot be overlooked when addressing school and campus safety.

We have an obligation to all students, parents, educators, administrators, support staff, and every citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide the safest possible learning environment.

To accomplish this, in accordance with the authority vested in me by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and by § 2.2-134 of the *Code of Virginia,* I hereby create the Governor's Task Force on School and Campus Safety.

Governor's Task Force on School and Campus Safety

The Task Force's responsibilities shall include the following:

1. Evaluate school safety audits that have already been conducted and identify best practices that schools or divisions have implemented that would be helpful to all and review any audit findings that have not been addressed.

2. Recommend improvements to K-12 school safety protocols and procedures to ensure an even safer learning environment.

3. 3. Identify ways to improve and expand the use of School Resource Officers and School Security Officers in Virginia's public schools.

4. Recommend a mechanism for schools and localities to identify and share the best practices for improved school safety on an ongoing and continuing basis.

5. Suggest additional resources, programs, or tools that the Virginia Center for School Safety or the Department of Education could make available to Virginia's local school divisions and schools.

6. Identify any needed improvements to the school safety audit program to allow for better

information gathering and sharing.

7. Recommend needed improvements to campus safety policies or procedures at Virginia's public and private colleges, community colleges, and universities.

8. Coordinate with the Mental Health Workgroup of the Task Force, described below, and review the Workgroup's recommendations.

9. Examine current laws and regulations to identify gaps relating to school and campus safety and provide timely recommendations for legislative or budget amendments.

10. Review the recommendations set forth in previous state and national reports and studies and provide strategies for implementation of relevant, realistic recommendations that would enhance school or campus safety.

Task Force Membership

The Task Force will be co-chaired by the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of Public Safety, and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources. The membership will include representatives from state agencies, law enforcement, other public safety professionals, public and private education leaders, health care leaders, and the private sector to collaborate on how to best provide a safer learning environment for our students. Members shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

Membership shall include the following individuals or their designees:

- Superintendent of Public Instruction;
- Director of the Virginia Center for School Safety;
- Superintendant of the Virginia Department of State Police;
- Director of the Department of Criminal Justice Services;
- Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice;
- Director of the Department of Emergency Management;
- The Attorney General of Virginia;
- The Commissioner of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services;
- The Commissioner of the Department of Health;
- Director of the State Council on Higher Education;
- At least six representatives of law enforcement or other first responders, to include a representative of School Resource Officers;
- A member of the Secure Commonwealth Panel;
- At least six representatives of elementary, secondary, and higher education, representing administrators, educators, counselors, and security personnel;
- One high school student at a Virginia school;
- One student attending a Virginia college or university;
- Two parents with at least one child currently in a Virginia school; and
- Two members of the House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia.

The Governor may appoint other members as he deems necessary.

Mental Health Workgroup

I direct the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to convene a Mental Health Workgroup to evaluate Virginia's mental health system to recommend improvements for identification, intervention, and treatment of behavioral and mental disabilities with a focus on ways to prevent acts of violence. Given the significant medical and legal complexities associated with this law, the Attorney General of Virginia and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources shall co-chair this workgroup. Members of the workgroup shall be named by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, bringing together experts from the mental health community. The work plan shall be devised by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources and presented at its first meeting. The workgroup shall make recommendations to the Task Force and present a copy of its recommendations to the Governor.

Task Force Staffing and Funding

Necessary staff support for the Task Force's work during its existence shall be furnished by the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Offices of the Secretary of Public Safety, Secretary of Education, and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, as well as such other agencies and offices as designated by the Governor. An estimated 250 hours of staff time will be required to support the work of the Interagency Task Force.

Necessary funding to support the Commission and its staff shall be provided from federal funds, private contributions, and state funds appropriated for the same purposes as the Task Force, as authorized by Section 2.2-135 of the Code of Virginia, as well as any other private sources of funding that may be identified. Estimated direct costs for this Commission are $1,000.00 per year.

The Task Force shall commence its work promptly and send initial recommendations no later than January 31, 2013. The Task Force shall make additional recommendations on an ongoing basis and shall provide a final report to the Governor no later than October 1, 2013. The Task Force shall issue such other reports and recommendations as necessary or as requested by the Governor. Due to the complex nature of the charge and the need for significant analysis, the Mental Health Workgroup, along with any other Workgroups of the Task Force, shall provide their recommendations no later than October 1, 2013.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and pursuant to § 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia* shall remain in force and effect for one year from its signing unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 16th day of May, 2013.

/s/ Robert F. McDonnell, Governor

Attest:

/s/ Secretary of the Commonwealth