

Testimony of Dr. Alyssa Goodwin, M.D. on behalf of the Maine Academy of Pediatrics in support of LD 477 "Resolve, Directing the Department of Education, Maine School Safety Center to Convene a Stakeholder Group to Develop Best Practices for Lockdown Drills and Allowing Parents to Opt Out of Lockdown Drills for Their Children"

Lawmakers, parents, educators, and pediatricians agree, we all want children to feel safe and be safe at school. In response to increased concerns about mass casualty events in schools, we have seen the creation of crisis preparedness efforts that now include children of all ages participating in high intensity live crisis exercises such as active shooter drills. High intensity active shooter drills may involve real weapons, gunfire or blanks, theatrical make up, or predatory behavior to simulate an active attack. Many school districts across Maine and the US now require active shooter drills among other emergency drills. There is no evidence that these practices actually improve safety outcomes in schools.

Active shooter drills are often planned and conducted without guidance from those familiar with the unique developmental needs and vulnerabilities of children. As we consider the creation and implementation of active shooter drills in schools we must remember that one in four of Maine's children have experience two or more adverse childhood events or traumas. Participation in an active shooter drill may unintentionally trigger or add to a child or adolescent's trauma response, even if this child is aware the event is a drill. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be included in crisis preparedness drills only to the extent that it prepares them to follow adult instructions for safety. We want to protect our children without causing unintended harm in the process.

LD 477 would support the development of evidence based best practices for Maine Children to practice emergency preparedness without the unintentional negative consequences potentially associated with many of the current practices across the state.

The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement on this issue in 2020. I have attached it here for your review and reference. Included are strong recommendations for the creation of thorough, developmentally appropriate school emergency preparedness programs.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/146/3/e2020015503/36710/Participation-of-Children-and-Adolescents-in-Live?autologincheck=redirected>