

TO: Panelists, Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety
FROM: Marissa Roy, Chief Consultant to the Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety
RE: Minutes from the May 12th Public Hearing

The fifth Blue Ribbon Panel hearing took place on May 12th from 2 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. at Valley Academy of Arts & Sciences in LAUSD District 3, represented by LAUSD Board Member Scott Schmerelson. Panel Chair Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer opened the meeting with an overview of the mission of the Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety and then introduced Board Member Scott Schmerelson. Drawing on his experience as a school principal, Board Member Schmerelson expressed that as much as academics matter, a good school must first and foremost be safe for students, and Board Member Schmerelson reminded students and families to take efforts to promote safety at home and to “say something” if they “see something.” After this address, City Attorney Feuer took a moment to remind the audience of the timeliness of school safety discussions, as a shooting had taken place only the day before at a school in Palmdale, in North Los Angeles County, injuring one person. Summarizing the previous meetings, City Attorney Feuer noted that this fifth panel meeting would be timely in light of the school shooting in Palmdale because it would be focusing on what the community could do to ensure students do not gain access to guns. City Attorney Feuer then introduced members of the Panel.

The hearing focused on “Preventing Access to Guns and Investigating Threats of Violence.” The hearing featured an initial presentation by a social worker and parent of students in the Parkland school district. After this initial presentation, the meeting focused on enforcing California’s gun storage laws, teaching parents to safely store their guns, building efficient reporting mechanisms for tips-offs about potential violence, and investigating threats to schools.

Lisa Wobbe-Veit, a Clinical Associate Professor of Social Work at USC and parent of three children in the Parkland school system, gave the first presentation to the Panel. Ms. Wobbe-Veit spoke about her personal experience on the day of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School: Though her two 9th graders were not in the building at that time, when she arrived to pick up her children, she found the doors locked with no explanation; only later did she learn that an active shooter remained at large and her children could be in danger. After that experience, Ms. Wobbe-Veit began consulting with the Mayor of Parkland and other community networks to create information channels between schools and community stakeholders. She has also drawn on her background in social work to expand access to trained trauma therapists in the district.

Following Ms. Wobbe-Veit’s presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question her in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking what concrete ideas Ms. Wobbe-Veit had for increasing resources devoted to trauma therapy for students.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit noted that she was not involved with efforts for state advocacy, but said that students’ relationships with law enforcement needs to be repaired.
- **Greig Smith, former Los Angeles City Councilmember, asked how many of the students of Parkland need long-term mental health counseling to cope with the**

shock and trauma of the recent shooting. Ms. Wobbe-Veit noted that there are many factors—a child’s past experiences, experience during the shooting, and individual resiliency—that might affect that assessment, but stated that many students in Parkland are having significant challenges and need long-term mental health support.

- **Gloria Martinez, United Teachers Los Angeles Elementary Vice President, applauded Ms. Wobbe-Veit’s efforts in Parkland and asked if teachers will be trained to continue long-term counseling efforts or integrate counseling into the curriculum in Parkland.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit responded that at the moment, the Parkland school district has provided full-time trauma-informed clinicians for Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.
- **Rocio Ramirez, a parent leader and PTA vice president, asked Ms. Wobbe-Veit how she would like to see the Parkland School District conduct itself differently in response to the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit said that the stakeholders had not maintained adequate communication with each other during the school shooting in Parkland, and she advised stronger channels of communication between parents, the school district, and law enforcement.
- **Los Angeles School Police Department Chief Steve Zipperman asked whether students in Parkland had been given active shooter trainings and how the district balances the need to train students and the risk of exposing them to trauma through training.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit responded that children want to know what to do in an active shooter situation, but that teachers must also be trained on how to debrief after trainings because some students may react to trainings differently based on their history of trauma.
- **Ben Holtzman, the student member of the LAUSD Board, followed up by asking whether teachers would have trauma following school attacks that could require treatment as well.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit responded that teachers do need treatment and that schools needed to be responsive so that teachers could support their students.
- **Dr. Marleen Wong, Senior Vice Dean at USC’s Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, noting that the Parkland perpetrator was widely known and feared, asked what happened when threats were reported about this perpetrator.** Ms. Wobbe-Veit responded that communication among stakeholders in Parkland broke down. She suggested more collaboration between local stakeholders.

This concluded the panelists’ questions for Ms. Wobbe-Veit. No members of the public gave comment on this presentation

After Ms. Wobbe-Veit’s presentation, Deputy City Attorney Greg Dorfman presented an overview of state and local gun storage laws to the panel. Mr. Dorfman explained that there are two categories of gun storage laws: those that instruct individuals on how to store guns generally and those that impose penalties for unsafe storage after a child has gained access to a gun. In general, if an individual stores a gun where a child could reasonably gain access to it, the individual could be convicted of a misdemeanor with a six-month sentence in county jail. Additionally, if an individual does not secure a handgun, that individual could be convicted of a misdemeanor with a six-month sentence in county jail under local ordinances. If a minor gains access to an improperly stored firearm and causes injury, the person who did not safely store the firearm can be convicted of a felony or misdemeanor. Additionally, child gains access to a loaded handgun and takes it off-premises, the person who failed to secure the handgun can be

convicted of a misdemeanor with up to one year in county jail. Mr. Dorfman reported that the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office works closely with the Los Angeles Police Department and Los Angeles School Police Department to prosecute parents when their children have gained access to guns. Mr. Dorfman noted that the office also engages in educational efforts for parents because minors gaining access to firearms in the homes is a "completely preventable" problem.

Following Mr. Dorfman's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened by noting that his office had recently prosecuted parents whose nine-year-old had brought a weapon to school in order to fight with another student. He reiterated that minors accessing guns in the home is a preventable problem.**
- **Ms. Ramirez asked if LAUSD could include gun storage information in the student handbook that is sent home with students each year. She also asked how often children gain access to guns outside the home.** Mr. Dorfman said that he would have to defer to LAUSD on the first question. On the second question, Mr. Dorfman said that he had only seen one case where a student gained access to a weapon outside the home; in the majority of instances, minors gained access to a weapon from a parent's or relative's home.
- **Mr. Holtzman followed up by asking for the ratio of guns that had been purchased legally or illegally.** Mr. Dorfman noted that in most cases the firearms had been lawfully obtained by the parent when the minor had accessed them.
- **Joey Hernandez, Policy and Mobilization Manager at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, asked if the law imposed a penalty when a minor gained access to an unloaded gun.** Mr. Dorfman responded that Los Angeles imposes a penalty, but state law does not.
- **Mr. Hernandez followed up by asking if there was state funding for safe storage education when an adult purchases a firearm.** Mr. Dorfman responded that gun stores are required to post fliers with storage requirements and that adults are required to pass a registration test that covers safe storage. However, there is no specific state funds for education or outreach on safe storage.
- **Mr. Hernandez asked if an adult's gun license could be revoked if that adult violates safe storage laws.** Mr. Dorfman said that restrictions on firearm use are often imposed as conditions of probation.
- **Mr. Hernandez asked if there is a state mandate that allowed a person's gun license to be revoked.** Mr. Dorfman noted that there are thirty misdemeanor charges that can cause a person to lose their gun license, but safe storage violations did not carry this penalty.
- **Pastor Kevin Sauls of Holman United Methodist Church asked if there are any consequences for the minor who accessed the gun.** Mr. Dorfman replied that the City Attorney's Office does not have jurisdiction over minors, but that minors could be prosecuted by the District Attorney's Office.
- **Dr. Wong asked if the consequences for parents varied if a minor committed an accidental shooting.** Mr. Dorfman responded that the consequences for a parent depend on the seriousness of the injury caused by a minor who gained access to an improperly stored firearm.

- **Julia Macias, President of the LAUSD Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council, asked Mr. Dorfman for examples of effective models that could help spread awareness about gun storage responsibilities.** Mr. Dorfman said that the educational efforts of Women Against Gun Violence and Moms Demand Action should be expanded.
- **Jessica Lall, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Central City Association, asked for recommendations on laws that would be beneficial to have at the state or local level to help educate adults on safe gun storage or otherwise prevent minors from accessing guns.** Mr. Dorfman noted that California and Los Angeles have comprehensive gun storage laws, but adults need to be educated on their duties under those laws.
- **Chief Zipperman noted that he would bring up including such duties in the LAUSD handbook.**
- **Mr. Hernandez asked if adults had to undergo mandatory safe storage training after being convicted of a gun storage offense.** Mr. Dorfman said that such training was a condition of probation imposed by the City Attorney’s Office, but noted that he could not speak for the District Attorney’s Office.

After the panelists’ questions, members of the public were invited to comment on the presentation. **One member of the public** noted that teachers need to be made aware of California’s gun violence restraining order laws. **One member of the public** stated that misdemeanors are toothless. **One member of the public** noted that schools need to devote more resources to student mental health. This concluded public comment.

Following Mr. Dorfman’s presentation, Paige Selby of Moms Demand Action (MDA) and Hollye Dexter from Women Against Gun Violence (WAGV) spoke to the panel about educating parents on their legal obligations to store firearms safely. Ms. Selby informed the panel that almost 500 children die by guns each year. The vast majority of children who obtain a firearm gained access in the home; 1.7 million children live in homes where guns are not responsibly stored. Ms. Selby discussed the Be SMART campaign, which emphasizes five steps: 1. **S**ecure guns in homes and vehicles; 2. **M**odel responsible behavior; 3. **A**sk about unsecured guns in other homes (e.g., when a child is going for a play date); 4. **R**ecognize the risks of teen suicide; and 5. **T**ell peers to Be SMART. Ms. Dexter noted that while Moms Demand Action has been able to bring the Be SMART campaign to a few parent meetings, some schools have objected to sending home information on safe storage because this information could be shocking.

Ms. Dexter noted that in Women Against Gun Violence’s twenty-five years lobbying for responsible gun laws at the state and local level in California, WAGV had worked to pass the nation’s strongest gun laws without infringing on the Second Amendment. Noting that she had personally begun advocating for safe storage after her seven-year-old brother was killed by a boy showing off a parent’s gun, Ms. Dexter emphasized the importance of educating parents on safe storage of guns. Forty percent of parents who own guns leave them unlocked in the home, and 22% of children have gained access without their parents knowing. As a result, the vast majority guns used in school shootings came from the home. WAGV offers the TALK project to schools and other community forums like churches. The TALK project discusses the risks and benefits of owning a gun in a home with children as well as parents’ legal obligations to store firearms

safely. WAGV has gotten permission from LAUSD to send a one pager flier with information home to parents, but school officials have been reluctant to allow trainings citing the upsetting nature or possible political tension of these trainings.

Following Ms. Selby's and Ms. Dexter's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question them in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **Ms. Ramirez opened questioning by asking how parents can be given information to help identify abnormal and potentially violent behavior rather than behavior that is simply a "teen phase."** Ms. Selby noted that MDA's Be SMART talk discussed spotting symptoms of mental health illnesses.
- **Pastor Sauls asked how men and fathers can become more involved as responsible parents to prevent minors' access to guns.** Ms. Dexter noted that men could come into the movement as mentors and role models.
- **City Attorney Feuer suggested a PSA campaign with a broad audience, such as in a movie theater.**
- **Ms. Martinez asked whether MDA's or WAGV's workshops were multi-lingual.** Ms. Dexter replied that WAGV's workshops were in English and Spanish, but that WAGV would like to add staff that could conduct workshops in Korean and Tagalog.
- **Dr. Wong asked for the rate of gun possession in Los Angeles.** Ms. Selby replied that California has one of the lower rates of gun possession among the states, within the 20-30% range.

This concluded the panelists' questions for Ms. Lawson and Ms. Sanders Gordon. After the presentation, City Attorney Feuer invited public comment on the topics raised by the presentation: **one member of the public**, a current student, suggested that schools should provide a semester long course on gun safety to students, and **one member of the public** suggested bringing back an educational effort administered within LAUSD schools by the Brady Campaign in the 1990s. This concluded public comment on this topic.

After Ms. Selby's and Ms. Dexter's presentations, Richard Webb, a retired police officer, presented his research on Colorado's state Safe2Tell hotline to field tips related to school violence. Mr. Webb noted that in the vast majority of school shootings, at least one person was aware that the shooter planned to attack the school; yet, these bystanders do not feel the impetus to report such knowledge because of persistent "codes of silence," whereby students feel they should not "tattle" on peers to adults. To break down these codes of silence and encourage reporting, Colorado instituted a Safe2Tell program, where a state agency fields all tips on potential school violence—not just related to shootings, but also to bullying and suicide—and refers them to the local districts with follow-up and monitoring. Last year the program fielded 9000 tips. Mr. Webb noted that what makes Colorado's Safe2Tell particularly successful is that it extends beyond one district to encompass the entire state.

Following Mr. Webb's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by noting that tips could potentially exceed school resources to follow up and asked for input on how to keep up with a high volume of tips.** Mr. Webb noted that a successful hotline program does encourage higher levels of reporting, and he emphasized that in Colorado, the state mandates that all tips receive follow up.
- **Mr. Holtzman asked how law enforcement agencies can cope with the influx of tips that may come after a publicized school shooting.** Mr. Webb noted that the volume of tips increases in the second half of the school year regardless of whether there has been a publicized school shooting.
- **Mr. Smith noted that there are seventeen other cities within LAUSD aside from Los Angeles and asked whether the Joint Regional Intelligence Center could help coordinate tips.** Mr. Webb responded that using JRIC to coordinate, manage, and delegate follow-up on tips would be similar to the Colorado model.
- **City Attorney Feuer asked what Colorado had done to create an atmosphere to break down codes of silence and help students feel comfortable reporting tips of violence to adults.** Mr. Webb emphasized that Colorado had coordinated a widespread campaign to advertise Safe2Tell to students, teachers, and law enforcement; additionally, Safe2Tell created multiple mechanisms for reporting including an app that was more user-friendly for youth.
- **Ms. Martinez asked whether Colorado’s Safe2Tell published reports that aggregate data about suicide, bullying, drugs, or depression to identify trends that may be useful for schools to be aware of.** Mr. Webb was not aware of such a function.
- **Pastor Sauls asked if Colorado’s Safe2Tell shared information with City Attorneys or District Attorneys.** Mr. Webb was not aware of such information sharing.
- **Ms. Ramirez asked whether Colorado’s Safe2Tell program was more efficient than the “See Something. Say Something” campaign.** Mr. Webb noted that Safe2Tell focused specially on reporting violence related to schools rather than general threats.

This concluded the panelists’ questions for Ms. Lawson and Ms. Sanders Gordon. After the presentation, City Attorney Feuer invited public comment on the topics raised by the presentation: **one member of the public** said that in order to increase information sharing, schools need to create an environment of mutual trust by increasing restorative justice and moving away from punitive measures like random metal detector searches. This concluded public comment on this topic.

After Mr. Webb’s presentation, Los Angeles School Police Department Deputy Chief Jose Santome presented to the panel on LASPD’s practices to field and investigate threats of school violence. Deputy Chief Santome noted that LASPD already implements many of the best practices that Mr. Webb had identified in Colorado. LASPD works with the Joint Regional Intelligence Center—covering eight counties in California—to share information on threats to schools and divide up investigative work to the appropriate jurisdiction. Analysts at LASPD and JRIC ensure that every tip has been accounted for by a law enforcement agency. When LASPD receives a tip, LASPD evaluates the context and legitimacy of the tip. If LASPD has the jurisdiction to evaluate the tip, LASPD investigates it in real-time. LASPD is committed to follow-up and case management, often bringing mental health representatives into an investigation to coordinate long-term counseling.

Following Deputy Chief Santome's presentation, panelists had the opportunity to question him in the style of a legislative hearing:

- **City Attorney Feuer opened questioning by asking for the weak link in the chain of fielding tips to investigating threats to case management.** Deputy Chief Santome identified messaging, noting that though there are four channels through which the public can report a tip, most do not know of any of these channels. Deputy Chief Santome suggested that the district needed to invest in a public relations campaign to encourage reporting.
- **Michael Pinto, an architect and education expert, asked how long it takes to resolve each tip; how many tips are open at any given time; and whether the department has the resources to investigate each tip.** Deputy Chief Santome noted that LASPD had the requisite resources to investigate tips because of its partnerships with JRIC and other law enforcement agencies.
- **Mr. Hernandez asked how LASPD balanced the need to investigate potential threats with students' free speech rights, especially off-campus on social media.** Deputy Chief Santome noted that LASPD always approaches investigations with students' constitutional rights in mind. He noted that the department uses publicly sourced data and if needed, lawful warrants.
- **Ms. Martinez noted that teachers need to be more aware of LASPD's programs.**
- **Ms. Ramirez observed that parents might be concerned about their children reporting threats if the dangerous student might retaliate against the reporter. She asked how LASPD addresses that concern.** Deputy Chief Santome acknowledged that threatening students may be able to deduce who reports them and noted that LASPD can provide witness relocation or victim assistance services.

This concluded the panelists' questions for Deputy Chief Santome. After the presentation, City Attorney Feuer invited general public comment:

- **Two members of the public** called for an end to LAUSD's policy of randomly searching students for weapons with handheld metal detectors.
- **One member of the public** recommended broader use of the School Dude Crisis Manager App so that parents could have access to individual school safety plans.
- **One member of the public** called for increased mental health services in schools.

After the audience had given comments, the meeting closed with information about the next panel hearings on June 2nd and June 3rd.