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**GOVERNOR WALKER'S SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN  
TESTIMONY OF DOA SECRETARY NOWAK AND DOA DEPUTY SECRETARY ZEUSKE  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
MARCH 20, 2018**

Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to discuss Governor Walker's School Safety Plan, outlined in the special session bills before the Committee today. My name is Ellen Nowak, and I am Secretary of the Department of Administration. With me today is Cate Zeuske, Deputy Secretary at the Department.

**SECRETARY NOWAK:**

No student, teacher, parent, or school employee should feel unsafe at school. That's why we are here today. The special session bills, proposed by Governor Walker, will provide the tools and resources necessary to improve school safety around the State, regardless of the school's size, budget, or location. Just like the federal government changed security and safety procedures for planes and airports after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, we need to do the same for our schools.

Working with Attorney General Brad Schimel, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, and numerous other stakeholders, this package will achieve our shared goal of protecting students by:

1. Establishing the Office of School Safety under the Wisconsin Department of Justice
2. Creating a \$100 million School Safety Grant Program
3. Requiring mandatory reporting for any threats of school violence
4. Amending statutes to include prompt parental notification when bullying occurs
5. Incorporating Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) into training programs
6. Strengthening school safety plan requirements; and
7. Encouraging cooperating with local law enforcement

First, I would like to highlight the new Office of School Safety that is created under this plan. The Office of School Safety will provide best practices and appropriate training for all schools around the State. Having this law-enforcement based resource available will allow Wisconsin schools to have access to the most current data and best practices as they work to ensure a safe learning environment for students, teachers, and school employees.

The Governor and First Lady Tonette Walker have been leaders nationally in the discussion of mental health and Trauma-Informed Care. Recognizing the impact Adverse Childhood Experiences have on a child's development and the importance of Trauma-Informed Care, this package requires that the Office of School Safety provide training so more teachers, coaches, counselors, and administrators utilize Trauma-Informed Care and recognize how it will help students.

Additionally, the Office will become a centralized location for important school documents, including blueprints of school buildings and required school safety plans. Comprehensive school safety plans are vital in any school safety discussion. Governor Walker's proposal will improve upon the currently required school safety plans by having resources available to assist in safety plan development and will encourage schools and local law enforcement to collaborate.

The Governor's School Safety Plan also includes a \$100 million investment in school safety. Let me repeat that: a \$100 million investment in school safety. The \$100 million investment will fund a new School Safety Grant Program, administered by the Office of School Safety. All of this is in addition to the historic investment of \$11.5 billion into K-12 education Governor Walker included in the current state budget - which includes a \$6.65 million new investment for mental health services within the schools.

The grants will be available to all schools in Wisconsin for building security improvements, training opportunities, and school resource officers, which can be current or retired law enforcement officers. The grant program allows all local schools and school districts to apply for funding based off what they specifically need to ensure the safety of all students and teachers.

**DEPUTY SECRETARY ZEUSKE:**

To ensure the \$100 million investment achieves maximum impact in Wisconsin, Governor Walker also issued an Executive Order last week directing DOA's Bureau of Procurement to ensure schools have access to the State's contracts and services so they can get the best possible price for safety capital improvements. Grant funding, coupled with additional buying power, will give every school, no matter its size or location, the chance to make school safety improvements that meet their specific needs.

In addition to providing \$100 million in funding for a school safety grant program and establishing the Office of School Safety, Governor Walker's School Safety Plan includes several other components that will help increase school safety, encourage cooperation with local law enforcement, and ensure proper reporting.

First, the plan expands current mandatory reporting requirements for professions such as teachers, school counselors, doctors and mental health professionals, to include threats of school violence. We want to ensure that when an individual is threatening to commit a serious act of violence against a school, that those who might be aware of that threat are required to report it and start the first steps of intervention.

Second, the Governor's plan amends the Department of Public Instruction's model policy on bullying to include prompt notification to parents or guardians when their child is involved in a bullying incident. This report will need to occur within 48 hours under this change. Alerting parents and guardians promptly to bullying incidents involving their child will ensure that they are involved in and aware of the child's behavior in a school setting.

Third, this plan encourages greater cooperation between schools and local law enforcement. Schools are required to have local law enforcement conduct a site assessment of their buildings while developing their school safety plan. Before submitting a grant application for the School Safety Grant Program, schools are required to have sign-off from their local law enforcement on their proposed use of funds. Schools are required to share blueprints with local law enforcement to ensure that those

officers have the tools necessary to respond to emergency situations. Finally, state law is clarified to ensure that live video streams of schools can be shared with law enforcement for the purposes of student and teacher safety.

**SECRETARY NOWAK:**

As you can see, school safety is a priority for Governor Walker. It is why we are creating an Office of School Safety with an expert to provide guidance and best practices. It is why we are requiring certain individuals to report threats of school violence. It is why we are incorporating Trauma-Informed care into training for teachers, counselors and school administrators. And it is why we are investing \$100 million in school safety for all students at all schools and creating opportunities to schools to maximize funding.

The safety of our students, parents, teachers, and school employees is of utmost importance. We need to ensure this safety so our children are free to learn at school, our teachers are free to teach, and our parents can have peace of mind.