



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR BILL GALVANO**  
*Republican President Designate*

September 7, 2018

The Honorable Rick Scott  
Governor  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott,

I received your letter dated August 30, 2018, regarding funding for school safety, which thoughtfully and appropriately summarizes the swift action taken to pass the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act (Senate Bill 7026) in the wake of the horrific shooting earlier this year that took the lives of fourteen students and three staff members in Parkland, Florida.

Like you, I have made a personal and public commitment to continually review existing policies and encourage new ideas to keep our students safe. As such, I carefully reviewed your letter and the related budget amendment proposed by the Florida Department of Education. As I have discussed with you in the past and stated publicly over the last several weeks, I cannot support redirecting funds appropriated for the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program.

Florida is currently less than a month into the 2018-19 school year. For the Guardian Program to truly be vetted and ultimately embraced, I believe the program should maintain its own funding rather than having its funds comingled with other funds available for school safety. I respectfully disagree with your statement that the \$58 million in available funding will go to waste if the proposed budget amendment is not adopted.

Time is needed to allow for the effective implementation of the Guardian Program. School districts, counties, individual charter schools, and local law enforcement agencies are still in the process of developing their plans and unique local funding arrangements to meet the requirements of Senate Bill 7026. Thus, the actual number of school guardians and the specific amount of funding sheriffs' offices will need to train guardians to meet local needs is still unknown and will evolve throughout the year. For example, based on information currently

available on requests from sheriffs' offices, the amount of requested funding for training guardians varies widely across counties, ranging from approximately \$1,600 to an upwards of \$45,000 per guardian.

These initial calculations are based on proposed budgets that have not yet been reviewed by the Department of Education for allowable expenses. Although these proposed Guardian Program budgets will likely change prior to the release of funds, the wide variance in requests amplifies my concern considering the proposed amendment transfers the remaining balance of Guardian Program funds to school districts for other uses. The proposed amendment leaves no program funds available to meet the evolving needs for school guardians that most certainly will occur throughout the school year.

In addition to my belief the proposed amendment is not ripe at this time given the current posture of the Guardian Program, I have concerns regarding both how the amendment would be implemented, as well as the security-related funding gaps it would create in our state budget.

The additional funding provided by Senate Bill 7026 for the FEFP Safe School Allocation (\$98 million) and the Guardian Program (\$67.5 million) have specific language in law governing the use of funds. If approved, the amendment would essentially create a new program, with no accompanying proviso or law to govern the actual use of funds by the school districts. The proposed amendment also creates an additional budget problem by explicitly creating a recurring funding obligation with the use of nonrecurring funds. Thus, by both removing remaining funds from the existing Guardian Program, and committing those nonrecurring funds to a separate, recurring purpose, the proposed amendment creates two school security-related funding gaps for the upcoming fiscal year.

A main goal of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act is that each school facility has at least one person specifically trained and able to respond appropriately when students and school personnel are in danger from an assailant. I believe the 2018-19 General Appropriations Act and Senate Bill 7026 provide the funding and policy framework to make this goal a reality in our school districts. The Senate will continue to monitor the Department of Education's implementation of this important legislation. In addition, I remain open to reviewing future amendments on this matter, should they be proposed, in the coming months.

As you are aware, the legislation also created a special commission, including parents of victims, which has been meeting in earnest over the last few months to develop recommendations for improving school safety. I am confident the commission will continue to generate additional positive ideas to improve the safety of the students entrusted to the care of our schools, and I look forward to reviewing their recommendations.

As I have said publicly, I expect the 2019 Legislative Session to include a revisiting of school safety issues that will be informed by the work of the commission and a better understanding of how the programs we put in place are being implemented. Many of the ideas pioneered in Florida during such a heartbreaking time are serving as the foundation for policies in other states. Thank you for your ongoing leadership as our state addresses the critically important issue of school safety. I look forward to continuing to work with you to keep our students safe and to share Florida's experiences and reforms with other states.

Respectfully,



Bill Galvano