

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**  
**“Examining State and Federal Recommendations for School Hardening and Safety”**  
**Thursday, July 25, 2019**

I want to start today’s hearing by expressing my sincere condolences to the parents, families, students, and teachers across the nation who have lost loved ones to school violence. To Mr. Schachter and Mr. Hoyer, and to your families, you have suffered an unspeakable tragedy. I have the utmost respect for your courage and strength, and your commitment to turn your tragedy into positive action that can help prevent tragedy for others.

Unfortunately, targeted mass attacks have become all too common. Since 1998, there have been 56 mass school attacks, including Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado in 1999, Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut in 2012, and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida in 2018.

Ninety-one percent of these 56 school attacks were committed by a student or former student, with 73 percent of attackers being between the ages of 14 and 19 years. Most of the casualties from these attacks occurred within the first four minutes. These facts indicate that schools must attempt to identify potential threats before they develop into an attack, but also be prepared to quickly and effectively react to minimize the casualties of an attack.

After the Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland school attacks, commissions were formed to analyze events leading up to the attacks, determine what could have been done to prevent or mitigate those attacks, and recommend what should be done to prevent or mitigate future attacks. The commissions had many similar, if not identical, recommendations: requiring schools to develop and train personnel on emergency crisis plans; establishing threat assessment teams; understanding the roles and responsibilities for emergency response teams; sharing data between stake-holding institutions on students who pose a threat; and increasing training on large-scale emergencies. Other commonly agreed upon recommendations were: scheduling annual or more frequent crisis drills; establishing bullying and violence prevention programs; conducting risk assessments; and increasing children’s mental health resources. Some proposals from these commissions are more controversial, such as arming teachers or increasing law enforcement presence in schools; amending state and federal privacy laws for mental health information sharing with schools and law enforcement; enhancing school disciplinary policies; and various gun control proposals.

The purpose of today’s hearing is to review the work of these commissions to determine which recommendations have broad support, which would be most effective, and which could be quickly and easily implemented. We should also ask which recommendations from state commissions and the federal commission have been adopted or are being implemented today. To the extent effective, agreed upon recommendations are not being implemented, we should determine what is keeping schools or local officials from adopting them.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses for being here today and for your efforts to educate Americans on the recommendations of state and federal commissions. I also look forward to

your suggestions on how we can work together to help improve school security and keep our children safe and secure.