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August 6, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor
The Honorable Members of the California Legislature
The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Jackie Lacey, District Attorney, Los Angeles County
Sheriff Jim McDonnell, Los Angeles County
The Honorable Eric Garcetti, Mayor
The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
Chief Michel Moore, Los Angeles Police Department
The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles Unified School Board
Superintendent Austin Beutner, Los Angeles Unified School District

On the heels of the tragedy in Parkland, I convened a Blue Ribbon Panel on School Safety to identify specific steps the LAUSD and our broader community can take to best protect our children—cognizant that while other school districts frequently turn to the LAUSD for advice on school safety, with stakes this high we should strive to do even better. It is my privilege to transmit to you the Panel's report, containing a broad set of recommendations that build upon the District's many measures designed to keep students safe.

Our Panel includes authorities in education, public safety, gun violence prevention, law enforcement, trauma and mental health, public health, and architecture and design. It engaged stakeholders—students, parents, teachers and administrators—as well as leaders from the business, philanthropic, and faith-based communities. The Panel met in each local School Board District, held eight public hearings, and listened carefully to experts and community members.

Our report reflects the Panel's consensus that school safety must be addressed comprehensively: tackling access to guns *and* access to mental health resources; how schools are designed *and* how threats are reported; conditions on campus *and* in surrounding neighborhoods. Our proposals are concrete and achievable. Many would yield benefits beyond safety: promoting student well-being, social and emotional growth—and, consequently, academic performance.

A sampling of some of our key recommendations conveys the scope of the challenge. Our Panel heard testimony that often students bring weapons to school to defend themselves because it can be dangerous to walk to and from the campus. So we propose a strong, district-wide safe passage to school program; a new level of coordination among law enforcement, gang reduction, prosecutorial, and other agencies in school neighborhoods; and expanding a program that brings city resources to improve areas adjacent to schools. Because most school shooters obtained firearms from the home of a parent or a relative, we propose creating a robust safe gun storage project that assures parents know their legal obligations, and

requiring parents to attest at the beginning of each school year that if there's a gun at home, it's stored safely.

Though mental health issues don't typically lead to violent behavior, sometimes they do, especially for students who feel isolated and desperate. The Panel learned that a significant percentage of LAUSD students suffer trauma at home or in violent neighborhoods, making them at once vulnerable to others and susceptible to committing acts of violence themselves. Our Panel heard, however, about the acute shortage of mental health professionals in the school system, rendering successful interventions extremely difficult. We recommend a concerted strategy that ultimately assures at least one mental health professional at every school.

We learned that key LAUSD minimum safety guidelines—a single, controlled point of entry to each school; interior locks on classroom doors; and two-way intercoms so teachers can communicate with the main office in an emergency—only apply to new or modernized schools. These features are so important that they should be included in *all* District schools. We strongly recommend developing and implementing a plan to expedite that.


The majority of school attacks were premeditated. And in more than eighty percent of school shootings, at least one person, usually a peer, had information that the shooter was planning to commit violence. Schools need cultures of trust where students feel comfortable reporting threats like these. And the District needs a single, easy to navigate, anonymous system of reporting threats to schools, bullying, and other dangers.

Leadership here is vital. Given the wide-ranging responsibilities of LAUSD officials, we recommend an accountable District leader be exclusively in charge of assuring that all facets of school safety are integrated and effective.

Funding will be key. While some recommendations would require few if any resources, others would need significant money at a time the District confronts a fiscal crisis. There are, however, multiple potential sources, private and public, to pay for these proposals. To take a few examples, the business community should join with the District in a robust adopt-a-school program. The philanthropic community should pitch in with dollars specifically devoted to school safety. Current and future state bond funds should be tapped for needed physical improvements. Public grants should be pursued: as we were drafting our report, the federal government released grant solicitations in areas on which our Panel focused—and thanks to partnerships developed through the Panel, applications were submitted for two of these grants. The state government should help effectuate the Panel's proposals, especially those requiring non-recurring costs, through supplemental appropriations. And LAUSD leadership should take key safety issues into account when fashioning a possible future local revenue measure.

Our Panelists stand ready to collaborate with the LAUSD on this crucial mission. Let's not wait for a local tragedy to spur us to do all we can to keep our children safe at school.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL N. FEUER
Los Angeles City Attorney