

Testimony Act 29
Senate Education Committee
January 18, 2024

Good morning Senators and thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

My name is Dee Barbic, and I am the Director of the Violence Prevention Task Force. Within the broad scope of violence prevention, school safety has been a large part of my focus in this position.

As you recall there are several major sections of Act 29, covering options based response drills and fire drills, access control and visitor management policies, development and maintenance of emergency operations plans and training and policy development for school threat assessment teams.

The work related to many parts of this Act, including drills, developing emergency operations plans, and threat assessment training, started years prior to Act 29's coming into effect. Through grant funding that was awarded to the Department of Public Safety, work was done to develop an EOP template, workshops were held designed to assist schools in developing their emergency operations plans, and behavioral threat assessment training was offered.

Since the passage of Act 29, the VSSC and the Agency of Education have done an incredible amount of work together on the implementation of the Act, including continual collaboration with schools and stakeholders during this process. Much progress has been made in the development of policies, reporting, updating the EOP template to include a guidance document and continued training for behavioral threat assessment teams, and there is a lot of work still ahead.

Sunni Eriksen of the Vt School Safety Center and Jill Brigg Campbell of the Agency of Education are here to go into more detail on the work that has been done to date and I will turn this over to them.