



To: House Committee on Education  
From: Amy Mullen, National Education Association Rhode Island  
Date: April 3, 2024  
Re: Support of H-8102 School Emergency Drill Act

Dear Chairman McNamara and Committee Members,

I am a 30-year teacher in Tiverton and vice president of NEARI. I am writing in support of Rep. Boylan's bill H-8102. As the vice president of the National Education Association of Rhode Island, I bring my insights from serving on the Legislative Study Commission to Evaluate and Provide Recommendations on Mandated Safety Protocols for Rhode Island Schools today. It is gratifying to see many of those findings incorporated into this legislation.

This legislation goes beyond mere protocols and procedures. It is a comprehensive blueprint for the safety and well-being of our students and staff. It offers trauma-informed, best-practice training on lockdown and evacuation procedures, customized to each school's unique needs. This holistic approach ensures that all educators in our K-12 schools in Rhode Island are equipped with the knowledge to safeguard our students, staff, and themselves in any crisis.

This legislation also carefully considers our students. Age- and developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed training for our students ensures that our students will be informed and prepared for an emergency. The legislation considers the fact that many of our students have experienced trauma and ensures that training for these emergencies does not cause additional trauma. It also allows schools to exempt students from these drills if and when necessary and requires that they be provided alternative education around the drills. There may be students with special needs, sensory issues, traumas, or other reasons that make participation in these types of drills contrary to what is in that student's best interest. No child should be forced to participate in something that could cause them more harm than benefit them. This legislation ensures this will not happen.

Drills announced in advance allow those participating to be aware that the situation is a drill, not an actual crisis event. Advanced notice helps to keep panic and trauma low and allows participants to look for ways to improve the drill and drill process. Working with law enforcement does the same. Working with safety and law enforcement agencies helps ensure that best practices are being executed and deficiencies are addressed and corrected before another drill or event occurs.

This legislation also provides that a debriefing occurs after an actual crisis. Debriefing allows for accurate information to be shared about the crisis incident. It also allows all those involved in the incident to share their experience of what was done successfully and what might not have been as successful, so that it can be improved upon and the safety of all can be prioritized.

Passage of this legislation will ensure consistency and uniformity for schools across our state. This will help keep everyone prepared for an emergency or crisis. All students, educators, and staff can feel confident knowing that trauma-informed best practices are being implemented in all districts in Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Amy Mullen  
Vice President, NEARI