Back-to-School Safety Summit

Gov. Cooper Video Script

Welcoming Remarks

Monday, Aug. 12, 2021

* Good afternoon – I’m Governor Roy Cooper.
* I’m sorry I can’t be with you today as you discuss school safety.
* I welcome you, but most of all I thank you for your commitment to school safety.
* School safety isn’t a partisan issue; it affects all of us regardless of where we fall on the political spectrum.
* I’ve spent a large portion of my career working to make the public safer – even before I became the governor of this great state.
* During my years as attorney general, I saw that ensuring public safety, in efforts large and small, always required strong collaboration between state and local stakeholders.
* That has never been truer than it is today, as we continue to face the challenges of a global pandemic. That need for collaboration is the reason you all have gathered together today.
* We must continue to work with a whole of community, whole of government approach as no one person, no one entity, no one branch of government can do this alone. It must be an all hands approach.
* That’s why the state action plan for school safety that we will debut today, builds off preexisting school safety studies by the Governor’s Crime Commission, the Center for Safer Schools, the U.S. Secret Service, and information gained through public forums and meetings with stakeholders.
* It is truly a collaborative, whole-of-community plan.
* The plan stems from a long history of school safety efforts in North Carolina and specifically from the work of the Governor’s Crime Commission’s Special Select Committee on School Shootings.
* After the horrific loss of seventeen lives in February 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, I asked Public Safety Secretary Hooks to direct the Governor’s Crime Commission to establish a special committee to identify resources and develop recommendations to strengthen school safety.
* The GCC Committee envisioned that the next step in school safety efforts in North Carolina should be a statewide plan.
* The key purpose of the state action plan is to ensure coordination of effort by state government agencies; it identifies who is doing what and what needs to be done, so all stakeholders know what’s going on.
* The plan is a detailed five-year plan with 5 goals, 12 objectives, and 66 initiatives.
* The vision of the plan is that every school in North Carolina will be a safe school where all students can learn, all teachers can teach, and all school staff can do their work without any concerns for their well-being.
* Its message is that prevention should be a main focus when it comes to school safety.
* We can’t stress enough that the plan is a living document, and the expectation should be that it evolves as needs change. The pandemic has certainly taught us the importance of adaptability.
* The plan is already having an impact with its inclusion in the Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice as a recommendation and its use by the Task Force for Safer Schools.
* We need to continue our efforts as we work together to implement the plan: collecting and sharing information and evaluating all of our efforts to ensure they are allowing the vision of the state action plan for school safety to become reality.
* Thank you for your role in this effort. I can’t imagine anything more important.