



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Mike H. Morath
Commissioner
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath:

As Texans mourn with the families of Uvalde, the State must take every possible step to prevent another tragedy. In 2019, the Texas Legislature passed comprehensive school safety and mental health legislation to ensure schools are safer for students, educators, and staff. Additional work since 2019 has built upon this effort. But more must be done to ensure our schools are safe before the next school year begins.

We must immediately act to further equip our public schools with the resources, training, and support needed to provide a safe environment for our students and educators.

The task of ensuring the safety of our schools and students is not solely held within one entity in the State, but encompasses many different agencies and divisions, all with different charges and authority in implementing legislation and making recommendations for future policy changes.

While we have seen these agencies work together earnestly in the wake of the tragedy in Uvalde, a single point of contact to coordinate such efforts, now and in the future, would further improve their services. That is why I charge you with creating the position of Chief of School Safety and Security within the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Given the critical nature of this role, the Chief of School Safety and Security should report directly to the Commissioner and have a direct line to the Office of the Governor. The person in this role should be a recognized expert on school security and public safety issues, an effective coordinator of multidisciplinary teams, a resource to school districts and the legislature, and effective at implementing programs.

This position should not hinder the important work or autonomy of any agency—each agency will continue its critical functions. Nor should it duplicate the work already underway. Instead, the Chief of School Safety and Security should enhance all agency services by increasing communication and collaboration among the professionals at TEA, the Texas School Safety Center, the Department of

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Public Safety, the Health and Human Services Commission, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, the Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium, the Advance Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center, school districts, and others.

The Chief must ensure that Texas schools are implementing the school safety policies passed by the legislature and take every action possible to ensure that schools are using best practices to safeguard against school shootings or other dangers.

I want to thank you for the hard work you have done, and continue to do, for Texas school districts. We must remain resolute in our efforts to ensure that our school districts are safe for all Texas students, teachers, and school staff. They deserve that. And we must provide it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Abbott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:shd

cc: Director Kathy Martinez-Prather, Ph.D., Texas School Safety Center
Director J. Pete Blair, Ph.D., Advance Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center
Commissioner Harrison Keller, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Colonel Steven C. McCraw, Texas Department of Public Safety
Commissioner Cecile E. Young, Health and Human Services Commission
Director Kim Vickers, Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
Vice-Chancellor David Lakey, M.D., Texas Child Mental Health Care Consortium