

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Infrastructure and Security

BILL: CS/SB 70

INTRODUCER: Infrastructure and Security Committee, Senators Book and Berman

SUBJECT: Panic Alarms in Public Schools

DATE: January 14, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Proctor	Miller	IS	FAV/CS
2.			AED	
3.			AP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 70 creates “Alyssa’s Law.”

The CS creates a new section of statute to:

- Define “panic alarm” to mean a security system signal generated by the manual activation of a device or an alternative mechanism intended to communicate a life-threatening or emergency situation that requires a response from law enforcement;
- Define “public school building” to include all buildings on a public elementary, middle, or high school campus where instruction takes place or where students are present during the school day; and
- Require each public school to be equipped with a panic alarm system for use in a school security emergency, including, but not limited to, a non-fire evacuation, lockdown, or active shooter situation. The panic alarm system must be accessible to administrators, teachers, staff, and other designated personnel at all locations on the school grounds and provide permanently installed alert indicators located at indoor and outdoor locations. The panic alarm system must be directly linked to the main office at the school and to local law enforcement agencies that are designated as first responders to the school’s campus, and the system must immediately transmit a signal or message to those authorities upon activation.

The CS may have an indeterminate, likely significant, negative fiscal impact to school districts.

The CS has an effective date of July 1, 2020.

II. Present Situation:

Alyssa Alhadeff

Alyssa Alhadeff, was a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, who was among the 17 killed during a school shooting in February 2018.¹

School Shootings

School shootings have become frequent tragedies in the United States. There have been over 234 shootings at primary and secondary schools since the shooting at Columbine High in April 1999, resulting in the loss of 144 lives.² In 2018 alone, there were 25 shootings - the highest number during any year since at least 1999,³ and a Washington Post database of school shootings indicates that over 236,000 students have been exposed to gun violence.⁴ Although school shootings in America are rare compared to daily gun violence, the data indicates they are happening more frequently.

9-1-1 Calls

Calling 9-1-1 during an emergency is not difficult; however, calling the number, staying on the line, and trying to explain what is happening during a time of distress may be challenging for some.

While wireless phones can be an important public safety tool, they also create unique challenges for emergency response personnel and wireless service providers. Since wireless phones are mobile, they are not associated with one fixed location or address. While the location of the cell site closest to the 9-1-1 caller may provide a general indication of the caller's location, that information is not always specific enough for rescue personnel to deliver assistance to the caller quickly.⁵ In this situation, though the authorities might be aware of a disturbance in a general area, they will not know the nature of the threat or exact location unless the 9-1-1 caller is able to stay on the call and relay that information. Due to this, in some cases the police and paramedics may not know how many personnel should be involved, where to set up a safe location or rally point, where to relocate students (in the case of a school shooting incident), and of course, where a shooter is located (in the case of a shooting incident). All of these factors taken together may delay resolving a situation and getting people to safety.

In many cases of school shootings, there are already fatalities before a 9-1-1 call is placed because most people are not aware of the threat until after shots have been fired. The average

¹ Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, *Second Report* (November 1, 2019), available at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/MSD-Report-2-Public-Version.pdf> (last visited December 27, 2019).

² Maya Rossin-Slater ET AL.(2019), Local Exposure to School Shootings and Youth Antidepressant Use (Working Paper 26563), available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w26563> (last visited December 27, 2019).

³ John Woodrow Cox ET AL., *More than 236,000 students have experienced gun violence at school since Columbine*, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/school-shootings-database/> (last visited December 27, 2019).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Federal Communications Commission, *911 Wireless Services*, available at <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/911-wireless-services> (last visited December 26, 2019).

shooting lasts 12 minutes,⁶ while the national average response time by authorities, taking into account all types of calls, to be on scene in response to a 9-1-1 call is approximately 15 minutes and 19 seconds after a 9-1-1 call is placed and the incident is reported.⁷

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission is entrusted with investigating system failures in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting and prior mass violence incidents, and developing recommendations for system improvements.⁸ The commission submitted its initial report to the Governor and the Legislature on January 2, 2019, and its second report to the Governor and Legislature on November 1, 2019.^{9,10} The commission is authorized to issue a report annually, by January 1, and is scheduled to sunset July 1, 2023.¹¹

The commission's second report includes numerous school safety and security recommendations, which includes language directing that, "some emergency drills should require movement and exercise all necessary aspects of the drill and emergency operations plan, including panic buttons ...", and "the timeliest way to communicate an on-campus emergency is direct reporting from a school staff member to everyone on campus and the 911 center simultaneously."¹² The last recommendation could be fulfilled with the installation of active shooter panic buttons in school buildings.

Panic Buttons

On average, there are 10 school shootings a year nationally since the shooting at Columbine High School.¹³ Since then, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has adapted their protocol for dealing with gun threats. When a shooting occurs, the official DHS guidance is to run if possible; quietly hide, ideally in a place that can be locked, if fleeing is not possible; and, fight only as an absolute last resort.¹⁴ This protocol may ensure that students can be reasonably safe, but it does not ensure that the authorities are able to be quickly informed of a threat, or know where a threat is coming from.

The DHS lists a number of evolving products and technologies for consideration in K-12 School Security which include: closed-circuit video (CCV), door blockers, gunshot detection systems, integrated application-based services, locks, mass notification systems, motion detectors, smoke

⁶ Ryan Sanchez, *How Columbine changed the way police respond to mass shootings*, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-school-shooting-columbine-lessons/index.html> (last visited December 26, 2019).

⁷ Auto Insurance Center, *Emergency Response Times Across the U.S.*, available at <https://www.autoinsurancecenter.com/emergency-response-times.htm> (last visited December 26, 2019).

⁸ Section 943.687(3), F.S.

⁹ Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, *Initial Report* (Jan. 2, 2019), available at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/CommissionReport.pdf> (last visited December 27, 2019).

¹⁰ *Supra*, note 2.

¹¹ Section 943.687(9), F.S.

¹² *Supra*, note 2.

¹³ John Woodrow Cox and Steven Rich, *Scarred by school shootings*, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/us-school-shootings-history/> (last visited December 26, 2019).

¹⁴ Jonathan Allen and Joseph Ax, *Run? Hide? Fight? Lockdown? Two U.S. School Shootings Highlight Differing Responses*, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-colorado-shooting-run-hide-fight/run-hide-fight-lockdown-two-us-school-shootings-highlight-differing-responses-idUSKCN1SE2LE> (last visited December 26, 2019).

cannons, tactical training and equipment for school resource officers, strobe lights, turnstiles, unmanned aircraft systems, and visitor management systems.¹⁵

New to the security market are integrated application based services that schools and local first responders and emergency managers can use. Some mobile phone applications act as panic buttons which any teacher can press to send an alert to the phone of police officers within a certain radius of a school. Other mobile phone applications focus on locking down a school by virtually securing doors. Some others integrate numerous protective measures such as locking doors, deploying smoke cannons, activating strobe lights, and monitoring CCV.¹⁶

In addition to integrated application based services, there are designated active shooter panic buttons that can be set up at a school and be monitored by the school administration, local law enforcement and first responders. By utilizing a designated active shooter panic button system, there is no question of what the threat is or where it is being reported, in addition, teaching staff, students, and the local police and first responders will be alerted to the disturbance. Having this sort of immediate alert system in place may mean the difference between life and death of a student or teacher by having all of the necessary parties on standby to allow anyone injured during an attack to potentially get faster extraction and medical attention.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The CS names the act (newly created s. 1013.373, F.S.) “Alyssa’s Law.”

The CS creates s. 1013.373, F.S., to:

- Define “panic alarm” to mean a security system signal generated by the manual activation of a device or an alternative mechanism intended to communicate a life-threatening or emergency situation that requires a response from law enforcement;
- Define “public school building” to include all buildings on a public elementary, middle, or high school campus where instruction takes place or where students are present during the school day; and
- Require each public school to be equipped with a panic alarm system for use in a school security emergency, including, but not limited to, a non-fire evacuation, lockdown, or active shooter situation. The panic alarm system must be accessible to administrators, teachers, staff, and other designated personnel at all locations on the school grounds and provide permanently installed alert indicators located at indoor and outdoor locations. The panic alarm system must be directly linked to the main office at the school and to local law enforcement agencies that are designated as first responders to the school’s campus, and the system must immediately transmit a signal or message to those authorities upon activation.

The CS has an effective date of July 1, 2020.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *K-12 School Security: A Guide for Preventing and Protecting Against Gun Violence* (2nd Edition: 2018), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/K12-School-Security-Guide-2nd-Edition-508.pdf> (last visited December 26, 2019).

¹⁶ *Id.*

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

This CS does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified in Article VII, s. 18 of the Florida Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Panic alarm systems for a public school would be sold and installed by private sector vendors, and would therefore have a positive impact on vendors selling or installing a panic alarm system.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The CS requires each public school to be equipped with a panic alarm system accessible to administrators, teachers, staff, and other designated personnel at all locations on the school grounds. The extent to which panic alarm systems are currently installed in public and charter school buildings is unknown. The CS may have an indeterminate, likely significant, negative fiscal impact to school districts.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The term “public school building” in the CS does not appear to be needed since the CS no longer provides that public school buildings should be equipped with panic buttons, and instead

provides that each public school be equipped with a panic alarm system accessible at all locations on the school grounds.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This CS creates the following section of the Florida Statutes: 1013.373

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Infrastructure and Security on January 13, 2020:

- Modified the definition of “panic alarm system” to remove the portion stating the security system signal be silent;
- Adds the panic alarm system must be accessible to administrators, teachers, staff, and other designated personnel;
- Expands installation locations from just buildings to all locations on the school grounds;
- Provides the panic alarm system must provide permanently installed alert indicators located at indoor and outdoor locations; and
- Adds that the panic alarm system must be directly linked to the main office at the school, in addition to local law enforcement agencies that are designated as first responders to the school’s campus, and the system must immediately transmit a signal or message to those authorities upon activation.

B. Amendments:

None.