

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 Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

BILL: CS/SB 70

INTRODUCER: Infrastructure and Security Committee; and Senators Book, Berman, and Stewart

SUBJECT: Panic Alarms in Public Schools

DATE: February 17, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Proctor</u>	<u>Miller</u>	<u>IS</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Underhill</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 70 creates “Alyssa’s Law.”

The bill 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 bill may have an indeterminate, potentially significant, negative fiscal impact to school districts.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2020

II. Present Situation:

Alyssa Alhadeff

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

School Shootings

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, and a Washington Post database of school shootings indicates that over 236,000 students have been exposed to gun violence.³

Life-Threatening Emergencies

Florida law requires district school boards to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of students at school. School districts must establish model emergency management and preparedness procedures that include notification procedures for life-threatening emergencies. The procedures must include commonly used alarm system responses for specific emergencies. Life-threatening emergencies are defined as weapon-use; hostage and active shooter situations; hazardous materials or toxic chemical spills; severe weather (hurricanes, tornadoes, and severe storms); and exposure as a result of a manmade emergency.⁴

9-1-1 Wireless Calls

Although wireless phones can be an important public safety tool, they also create unique challenges for emergency response personnel. Because wireless phones are not associated with one fixed physical location, authorities will not know the nature of the threat or the exact location unless the 9-1-1 caller is able to stay on the call and relay that information. Due to this limitation, police and paramedics may not know how many personnel should respond, where to set up a safe location or rally point, where to relocate students (in the case of a school shooting incident), and where an active shooter may be located.

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 See ss. 1006.07(4)(a) and (b), F.S.

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.⁵ 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, 2019.⁶ The commission is authorized to issue a report annually, by January 1, and is scheduled to sunset July 1, 2023.⁷

The commission's second report includes 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."⁸

Panic Buttons

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has identified a variety of technologies school districts can use to enhance school safety, including mass notification systems such as panic alarms.⁹ Panic buttons can be set up at a school and monitored by the school administration, local law enforcement. They can be hard wired, wireless, or application-based devices that send a signal notifying first responders of a school security emergency.¹⁰

Some mobile phone applications, "act as panic buttons, which a 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 or activating other protective measures such as locking doors, deploying smoke cannons, activating strobe lights, and monitoring closed-circuit video.¹¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill names the act (newly created s. 1013.373, F.S.) "Alyssa's Law."

The bill 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;

⁵ Section 943.687(3), F.S.

⁶ 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).

⁷ Section 943.687(9), F.S.

⁸ *Supra*, note 2.

⁹ 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.cisa.gov/publication/k-12-school-security-guide>.

¹⁰ SECURAlert, *Security Systems for Schools*, <https://www.securalert.net/blog/duress-system/security-systems-for-schools/> (last visited January 17, 2020).

¹¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *supra* note 17.

- 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 bill has an effective date of July 1, 2020.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

This bill 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 bill 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 bill may have an indeterminate, potentially significant, negative fiscal impact to school districts.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

The term “public school building” in the bill does not appear to be needed since the bill 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 bill creates section 1013.373 of the Florida Statutes.

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.