



**Sheriff Bob Gualtieri**

**Pinellas County Sheriff's Office**

*"Leading The Way For A Safer Pinellas"*

March 19, 2018

Mr. Mark Woodard  
Pinellas County Administrator  
315 Court Street  
Clearwater, FL 33756

Dear Mr. Woodard:

On March 9, 2018, the governor signed into law the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act—SB7026. The Act became law upon the governor's signature and is now in effect.

Section 26 of SB 7026 amends F.S. 1006.12 and mandates that a Safe School Officer (SSO) be assigned to every elementary, middle, and high school ("each public school") in every Florida school district. Charter schools are considered "public schools" and therefore must also be covered. An SSO is defined as a sheriff or police department employed law enforcement officer (SRO); a school district employed law enforcement officer; or a school guardian (armed school personnel). The guardian program must be approved by the school board and the sheriff to take effect.

The Pinellas County School Board voted on March 13, 2018, that it will not authorize the guardian program in Pinellas County Schools. This means there will not be a guardian program in Pinellas County (including charter schools because they are "public schools" and the law requires school board approval), and there must be a law enforcement officer (SRO) assigned to each Pinellas County elementary, middle, high, and charter school.

Law enforcement officers should be the line of "first defense" and the ones primarily responsible for the safety of students and school personnel. I do not support armed school personnel in lieu of an armed law enforcement officer—we must have an SRO on each campus. However, I support everyone's right to defend themselves and I support voluntarily armed school personnel on campus as a "secondary line of defense." Just like in off-campus situations, law enforcement cannot be everywhere and if people who are trained and feel comfortable carrying a weapon want to be in a position to protect themselves and others then I believe they should be able to do so. To reiterate, school personnel should be not be relied upon as the first responder to an active assailant situation on a school campus, that is the responsibility of a law enforcement officer.

There are no sheriff or police department SRO's currently assigned to any Pinellas County elementary schools, there are approximately 21 SRO's assigned to middle schools, and approximately 27 SRO's assigned to high schools. Using the officer to student ratio of 1:1,500, we are understaffed in the high schools by 10 SRO's. Palm Harbor University High has the highest student count in the district with 2,547 students and one SRO. The national standard ratio for SRO's to students is 1:1,000, and this is the standard the Governor and others have discussed as desirable in implementing this new law. Nevertheless, in consultation with Dr. Grego we have decided to implement the 1:1,500 ratio and to further evaluate needs once the revised staffing is in place.

The State currently provides Pinellas County Schools (PCS) with \$3.2 million in Safe Schools funding to pay for school safety/security, including the current SRO's. In addition to the SRO's from the sheriff's office and police departments, PCS also employs campus monitors, these are non-law enforcement personnel who augment the SRO's, and PCS has its own police department. The school district spends \$5.3 million for these three components (SRO's, campus monitors, and its own police department) against the current State funding of \$3.2 million. Thus, the district's current spending deficit is approximately \$2.1 million compared to the State's Safe Schools allocation.

The average fully loaded cost of a sheriff's office or police department SRO is \$100,000. The school board pays the sheriff's office and city police departments \$57,944 of each SRO cost and we pay the balance. There are currently about 46 SRO's (there are additional SRO's funded 100% by the sheriff's office and some police departments), which means the school board is paying approximately \$2.2 million (some SRO positions are funded at less than the \$57,944 due to the funding formula used by PCS) of the total SRO costs and the sheriff's office and city police departments are paying approximately \$1.6 million (not counting the additional 100% sheriff and police funded positions). There is no funding from PCS for a relief factor or costs for supervisors.

To implement the new law it will require an additional 101 new SRO's—81 for elementary schools and 18 for charter schools. There are currently about 46 SRO's and adding the 101 will bring the total to 147. Adding a relief factor of 1.2 means, we will require an additional 31 SRO's for relief due to sick leave, training, vacation, off-campus duties, etc. We also need to add 10 SRO's for proper staffing at the high schools. The new law requires an SRO on campus at all times while school is in regular session and there can no longer be gaps in coverage during the school day. We will further need approximately 14 supervisors (using a ratio of about 1 supervisor for every 10 SRO's). Combining current and needed SRO's, the total SRO staffing will need to be approximately 201 officers/deputies/supervisors.

The cost of all these positions (current and new) for salary and benefits will be approximately \$20.1 million. The new Safe Schools allocation from the State is \$2.9 million and combining that with the current funding, the State's total contribution is \$6.1 million. The current contribution by the sheriff's office and police departments is \$1.6 million, for a total of \$7.7 million. **This means the new annual funding needed to implement the law is \$12.4 million** (\$20.1 million - \$7.7 million).



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**In addition to the annual recurring funding needed for salary and benefits, there are one-time startup costs for the new SRO's of \$11.2 million** (156 new SRO's x \$72,000 each). This includes cars, guns, uniforms, computers, etc....

Currently the school's police department staffs 10 SRO positions. The PCS police will continue to be funded from the Safe Schools allocation and Dr. Grego has indicated that they will continue to staff these positions.

The sheriff's office has no funds to meet this statutory obligation and I am told by the police chiefs that the cities have no funds either. We have been communicating closely with Dr. Grego and he has conveyed to me that the school board likewise does not have the available funds. I have also been told by Dr. Grego that the school board does not have the legal authority to increase revenue through a property tax millage increase without a ballot referendum and the earliest that can be accomplished is 2019. See the attached email from school board attorney David Koperski stating a referendum is required for the school board to increase the millage.

We must have the new SRO's in place no later than July 1, 2018, so that we comply with the law and have proper security on all school campuses for the start of the new school year. The \$12.4 million is needed immediately because we will have to staff many of the schools with personnel on overtime or temporary duty while we hire new officers and deputies. The startup funding will be required over a period of time and it is not necessary that the full amount be immediately funded.

We continue to dialogue with the school district but it is important that you and the Board of County Commissioners are aware of this situation and the dire need to resolve this funding issue as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Gualtieri', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri  
Pinellas County, Florida

BG/sj

## Gualtieri, Robert

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**From:** Hunt Cathy <HUNTCA@pcsb.org> on behalf of Grego Michael <GREGOM@pcsb.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 16, 2018 12:15  
**To:** Gualtieri, Robert  
**Subject:** FW: Millage

Please see the information below from our attorney regarding millage revenue.

Michael A. Grego, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Pinellas County Schools  
727.588.6011 ~ Phone

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**From:** Koperski David  
**Sent:** Friday, March 16, 2018 12:05 PM  
**To:** Grego Michael <GREGOM@pcsb.org>  
**Subject:** Millage

Dr. Grego –

At this time, our School Board cannot raise additional millage revenue without a referendum. The only revenue it can raise is through referenda, either increasing our existing ad valorem tax operations referendum or proposing a new sales tax referendum.

By law, our maximum RLE millage is set by the Legislature and we can choose to levy an amount less than or equal to that amount, but not more. See ss. 1011.71(1) and 1011.62(4), F.S. We have consistently, as have other school boards, adopted the maximum RLE millage allowed by the Legislature. Thus, there is no room to increase the millage levy or collections.

So, at this time, based upon the prescriptive school board taxing powers under state law, there is no other mechanism to raise revenue other than a referendum. Other public agencies would have different taxing powers as described in the statutes applicable to them.

--David

David Koperski  
School Board Attorney  
Board Certified – Education Law  
Pinellas County Schools  
301 Fourth Street SW  
Largo, FL 33770  
727-588-6219 (p)  
727-588-6514 (f)  
[koperskid@pcsb.org](mailto:koperskid@pcsb.org)

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