



## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
June 16, 2022

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### ***Berks County Officials Conduct School Safety Roundtable*** **Thursday, June 16, 2022**

READING, PA – The Berks County Commissioners, the Berks County District Attorney, and Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) officials conducted a school safety roundtable for school leaders, emergency services personnel, elected officials, law enforcement, mental health administrators, and other key stakeholders at the BCIU Main Office (1111 Commons Boulevard, Reading, PA 19605) on Thursday, June 16, 2022. The event provided an open forum for participants to review Berks County’s current school safety strategy, share thoughts and questions, and discuss school safety initiatives for the 2022-2023 school year.

Over the past 12 plus years, Berks County officials have been strategically coordinating school safety and emergency preparedness through tools, training, and programs such as the Keeping Kids Safe Symposium, collaboration with community organizations focusing on student and staff safety and mental health, implementation of the CrisisGo emergency response communication app in schools across the County, access to the Safe2Say Program, school assessments provided through the Berks County Safety and Security Consortium, and yearly reviews of All Hazards Plans and the Standard Response Protocol.

Berks County officials are committed to their continued collaboration and efforts to ensure the safety and security of the more than 70,000 students, 5,000 educators, and school staff in Berks County. According to the *AASA (American Association of School Administrators) Position Paper on School Safety*, “research demonstrates that learning is enhanced when children feel safe and have their physical and emotional needs met in a healthy school environment.” Berks County leaders are tasked with addressing any issues that would inhibit access to a healthy school environment, and through this roundtable, key leaders were able to discuss pressing issues, evaluate their school safety initiatives, and collaborate on the most current best practices to keep students and staff safe while keeping families informed.

Berks County Commissioner Christian Leinbach recognized the need to convene this group of leaders to discuss school safety was critical following the events in Uvalde, Texas. “Safety and security for all members of our community is extremely important but ensuring the safety of our youngest and most vulnerable population and the professionals who are educating and caring for them is at top of mind following this horrific event. While school safety and security are multi-faceted and cross several different sectors including the work of emergency responders, mental health professionals, school leaders, and elected officials, I am confident we have the right people in place to continue leading these discussions and practical planning efforts to better protect our students and educators in Berks County.”

Berks County District Attorney John Adams, who continues to collaborate with the BCIU and other partners on the Keeping Kids Safe initiative and other school safety programs, shared, “I believe Berks County already has a solid foundation in the school safety space because in recent years we implemented many initiatives to combat this threat to our schools. While we have put these safeguards in place, our work is not done, and we will

continue to prioritize the safety and security of our school communities across the County.”

Dr. Jill Hackman, BCIU Executive Director, shared, “We are very fortunate in Berks County to have the leadership, collaboration, and partnerships of many organizations and individuals who are committed to ensuring our students, teachers, and school staff are kept safe and have the tools and resources they need to feel supported. Our focus on school safety is centered on communication, coordination, and collaboration, and through that focus, we will continue to plan and prepare to protect the physical, social, emotional, and mental health of Berks County students and school staff members.”

Following the Berks County School Safety Roundtable, members of the media were invited to speak with event co-hosts regarding school safety and security initiatives and their commitment to this work.

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