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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Education, Parent Groups Seek Broader School Safety Action**

*Nine professional and parent groups ask House Speaker Kirk Cox to expand focus of school safety committee*

In a letter delivered today to House Speaker Kirk Cox, the Virginia Education Association and eight other groups urged the Select Committee on School Safety, appointed by Cox, to seek additional counselors, social workers, and psychologists and not to “turn our schools into bunkers or armed fortresses.”

“We urge you to consider the whole child and the whole school community when you make your recommendations,” the letter says. “Focusing only on mass school shootings, security officers, and infrastructure will limit the real impact this committee’s work can have in making all our students safe at school.”

Signing on to the letter, in addition to the VEA, are:

The Fairfax, Norfolk, and Hampton Federation of Teachers  
The Virginia Parent Teacher Association  
The Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals  
The Virginia Counselors Association  
The Virginia Association of School Nurses  
Association of Teacher Educators in Virginia  
Virginia Association of Colleges of Teacher Education  
Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

The Committee’s next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, July 11.

In its letter, the nine groups noted that students’ mental health needs must be addressed, and that more staff are required to provide appropriate services.

“Our schools need resources to support students before any act of violence happens: we need more school counselors, school nurses, social workers, and psychologists,” the letter says. “We need more support professionals who can work one-on-one with those students most in need. We know that half of

the threat assessments conducted in 2017 involved suicide or self-harm. Without addressing the lack of support for students' mental health needs, we will not make our schools safe for all."

VEA and other representatives of the coalition plan to speak to their recommendations during public comment at the Select Committee's July 11 meeting. A copy of the letter can be found at <https://files.veanea.net/data/public/858567>.

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