



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

February 28, 2018

Raymund A. Paredes, Ph.D.
Commissioner
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
P.O. Box 12788
Austin, Texas 78711-2788

Dear Commissioner Paredes:

The murder of 17 students and adults in Parkland, Florida, two weeks ago demands that all government entities reevaluate and reassess compliance with all applicable laws related to public safety. Specifically, it is incumbent that you take immediate steps to ensure that college campuses in Texas are safe.

Texas Education Code, Section 37.108, requires public junior colleges to comply with certain planning and audit requirements and report these findings to the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC). In order to ensure that junior college districts are meeting all requirements and have the best information available to help keep their campuses safe, I ask that you take the following steps:

1. Catalog and share all available information from TxSSC on college campus safety, and distribute this information to all public junior college districts and universities. Also, distribute this information to private and proprietary institutions of higher education.
2. Ensure that all public junior college districts are in compliance with statutorily required safety and security audits and multi-hazard emergency operations plans. Specifically, ensure safety and security audits have been submitted to TxSSC, contain a multi-hazard emergency operations plan and cover all school facilities, both instructional and noninstructional.
3. Publish on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) website and via agency press release a list of any public junior college districts that do not satisfy the requirements of their 2015 audit referenced in point two above within 45 days of notice by THECB.

4. Ensure that all public junior college districts have made satisfactory progress toward completion of their statutorily required safety and security audits, due September 15, 2018. In light of recent events, encourage early submission of these audits to TxSSC.
5. Work with TxSSC, the Department of Public Safety and my office to draft recommendations to the Texas Legislature on policy changes to keep students safe. This could include:
 - a. increased quality controls on safety and security audits and emergency operations plans, including a mechanism for THECB intervention when audits or plans are deemed inadequate;
 - b. recommendations for statutory safety requirements that could be put in place for public colleges and universities;
 - c. required reporting procedures that colleges must follow when terroristic or other threats are received, including provisions for student, and where applicable, parental notification of certain threats; and
 - d. provisions for increasing the safety of noninstructional facilities, such as dormitories and student centers, as well as on-campus sporting events.

We must act expeditiously and prudently to ensure that college campuses are safe places to study, work and live. These are important first steps, and we will continue to evaluate improvements to our approach to campus safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Abbott".

Greg Abbott
Governor

GA:mck