

Statement of Lisa H. Thureau, on Behalf of Strategies for Youth
Regarding S.111:

**Strategies for Youth Opposes U.S. Senate Bill 111 Increasing
Militarized Responses in Public Schools**

September 14, 2021

Strategies for Youth (SFY), a national nonprofit training and policy organization that exists to improve police/youth interactions and reduce disproportionate minority contact, opposes [U.S. Senate Bill 111](#), the Luke and Alex School Safety Act of 2021. SFY believes this bill harm students in America’s public schools by promoting use of data that is not accurate, does not support best practices, and does not employ developmentally-appropriate, trauma-informed, racially equitable approaches to interactions with youth.

S.111, introduced by Florida Senators Marco Rubio and Chris Scott and named after two students who died in the Parkland School shooting in 2018, would create a Federal Clearinghouse on School Security Best Practices for use by state and local agencies. Using data from the Federal Commission on School Safety’s final [report](#) published in 2018, which has been cited as inaccurate or incorrectly interpreted, S.111 supports the use of practices that have been shown to lead to harmful outcomes for students, especially students of color.

“We are concerned that this bill will further militarize schools at a time when the nation is finally realizing the ‘warrior’ approach is extremely harmful to students,” said Strategies for Youth’s Executive Director, Lisa Thureau. “In a nation where youth have witnessed so much trauma in 2020 due to use of force by some law enforcement officers and due to COVID-19, the last thing we need to do is put more students and families at risk by adopting destructive school discipline policies.”

The bill would also involve the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in identifying best practices and recommendations. It would create a database of government-sponsored recommendations that are contradicted by hundreds of studies, and that ignores students’ needs, the positive benefits of social emotional learning, ensuring adequate mental health supports, and the vast amount of research on the damage of employing punitive approaches.

“American schools right now need to be viewed as safe places,” said Thureau. “America’s public schools do not need the involvement of the Department of Homeland Security to make them safe.”

SFY joins the Federal School Discipline Coalition and the Coalition for Smart Safety in opposing S.111. We urge the Senate to vote against this bill.