



April 15, 2026

The Honorable Hanna Gallo  
Chair, Senate Committee on Education  
Rhode Island State House  
82 Smith Street, Providence, RI 02903

RE: S2209

On behalf of the National Education Association Rhode Island and our 12,000 members, I write in strong opposition to Senate Bill 2209, which proposes to expand school security measures, establish a new school emergency response committee, and create and fund municipal rapid response/SWAT teams.

While we share the General Assembly's commitment to ensuring that every student and educator is safe in our schools, this legislation takes an approach that is overly reliant on law enforcement and militarized responses, while failing to incorporate the voices and expertise of those who are in our schools every day.

First and foremost, S2209 establishes an eight-member Rhode Island school emergency response committee that is notably absent of any classroom teacher, education support professional, or representative from the educators' unions. This omission is a critical flaw. School safety insight is best informed by those who work directly with students, understand school environments, and are responsible for implementing safety protocols in real time. Any meaningful effort to improve school safety must include educators as equal partners in both planning and decision-making.

Equally concerning is the inclusion of representatives aligned with the National Rifle Association. NEARI strongly opposes granting influence over school safety policy to an organization that has consistently taken hostile positions against common-sense measures designed to protect students, educators, and communities from gun violence. Elevating such perspectives risks undermining balanced, evidence-based policymaking that prioritizes prevention and student well-being.

The bill's heavy emphasis on the expansion of SWAT teams, sniper training, and tactical response units reflects a reactive, enforcement-centered model of school safety rather than a preventative, student-centered one. Research and experience show that the most effective school safety strategies focus on building positive school climates, increasing access to mental health supports, investing in school counselors and social workers, and fostering trusting relationships between students and staff. S2209 diverts attention and resources away from these proven approaches.

Additionally, the proposal to require annual school safety assessments, while well-intentioned, risks becoming an unfunded or under-supported mandate that places additional administrative burdens on already stretched school districts. Without meaningful educator input and adequate resources, such assessments may become compliance exercises rather than tools for genuine improvement.

In closing, NEARI urges the committee to reject S2209 in its current form. We stand ready to work collaboratively with policymakers to develop comprehensive school safety solutions that center the expertise of educators, prioritize prevention, and ensure that every student learns in a safe, supportive environment.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexander Lucini".

Alexander Lucini  
Government Relations Director, NEARI