

March 10, 2026

Chairman LaMountain  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Rhode Island General Assembly  
State House  
Providence, RI

RE: S 2280 – Health and Safety of Pupils – Emergency access provisions of School safety plan – Support

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Dr. Kevin Eberle a former COO and School principal, leading in education for 32 years. Before my tenure in education, I began my career as a police officer and a Tactical team member responding to many emergency situations. The span of my professional career has reached 45 years. I'm presently a professor at Empire University instructing school safety and violence prevention. I am speaking to you today in support of Senate Bill 2280. With a key Box installation, all schools will have an immediate entry point for those emergency personnel to approach any serious situation, for an efficient and timely response.

As a former police officer, I was placed in difficult situations when the need to enter buildings was stymied. In most cases, when an emergency was imminent, forced entry was required. This could be breaking windows, using crash bars to force open doors, or, in barricaded situations, battering rams were used. This unnecessary structural damage would have been eliminated if a key box had been accessible and would have been a safer entry for the tactical team

Fire Departments have been using this device for many years. Unfortunately, with today's emergency response situations, the Police and law enforcement agencies must be included in this solution. I was a school principal for over 25 years, and in many of our lockdown procedures, inquiry had always been a top concern on how emergency personnel were to enter a building when everyone was secured in their assigned rooms during a lockdown. This is a current dilemma today. Lockdown procedures are broken upon the arrival of emergency personnel. Many times, administrators or managers leave their secured rooms to open doors for personnel. The only other option is forced entry into these buildings. With the increased installation of security access points in schools, it is more difficult to breach a door in an emergency situation. This makes it very dangerous for police or entry teams to gain access to a school building.

I truly believe that installing Key Boxes will create a safer entry for emergency personnel while responding to serious situations in our schools. Everyone must have a shared vision that is consistent with the overall objective of keeping people safe. As with current laws in place for smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and sprinkler systems, I believe this legislation is necessary for a proactive, preventative measure in emergency response and recovery.

## Eliminating Response Delays

Senate Bill 2280 provides a mandated, tangible, and immediate solution to the life-threatening delay caused by inefficient building access. The requirement to install an exterior secure master key box in every school building directly solves the core problem with access.

## Conclusion

This is a bill about time—the time lost fumbling for keys or smashing through windows, and the time saved that can be dedicated to neutralizing a threat or providing aid.

A Key Box is not just a key repository; it is a vital bridge that allows emergency personnel to move directly from response to action. By amending and passing Senate Bill 2280 this body will ensure that every school in the state is equipped for the most efficient and timely emergency response possible.

Once again, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony on this most significant matter in keeping our communities safe.

Dr. Kevin Eberle