



March 6, 2018

RE: S.B. 6620 – Improving Security in Schools

Dear Senator Frockt, Senator Ranker, Senator Kuderer, Senator Dhingra, Senator Carlyle, Senator Darneille, Senator McCoy, Senator Keiser, Senator Billig, Senator Hunt, Senator Saldana and Senator Pedersen:

The American Institute of Architects Washington Council would like to express its strong support of Senate Bill 6620. This critical legislation will increase the safety of our state's public spaces, especially schools.

The American Institute of Architects

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The design of public spaces – for gathering, learning, culture, shopping, spirituality and recreation – is central to the practice of architecture. Americans have a right to be secure in these spaces. The alarming rate of mass shootings in our country is having a devastating effect on communities across our nation. We have deep sympathy for Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School's students, their families and their community and we support their crusade for change. We must stop the carnage.

Design that enhances the security of public space is part of the solution. At the same time, it is important to recognize that "hardening" public spaces may sometimes be at odds with its purpose. Learning environments, for example, must have a quality of openness and freedom that creates bonds and conveys a sense of optimism to young people. Schools should not be rigid, armed fortresses. We support improving school safety through a program of related measures which includes improving emergency response systems, enabling citizens to report potential threats and providing a reasonable background check process for the purchase of firearms.

SB 6620 responds to our concerns by calling for important reforms that would implement emergency response systems; assist community reporting of individuals who are perceived as threats; extend the background check process currently in place for pistols to the purchase of semiautomatic rifles and tactical shotguns; and establish a grant program for local law enforcement agencies to conduct these background checks.

All of these measures would increase the safety of our state's citizens, especially our young people. Thank you for your work on this essential legislation.

Respectfully,

Mark Cork
President, AIA Washington Council