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Res. No. 839

Resolution urging the federal government to provide homeland security funding in order to ensure safety and security in all New York City schools.

By Council Members Vallone Jr., Addabbo Jr., Avella, Fidler, Gennaro, Liu, Lopez, Nelson, Quinn, Sears, Stewart, Weprin and Lanza

Whereas, Safety and security should always be a top priority for every school principal, whether at a private, parochial or public school; and

Whereas, In the wake of the November 2004 tragedy where terrorists in the southern Russian town of Beslan seized a school in a standoff leaving more than 350 adults and children dead, the need for increased school security and protection of students became an alarming reality in the United States; and

Whereas, In a post 9/11 environment, the security infrastructure in the nation's educational institutions still lags considerably behind that of private-sector organizations and government agencies; and

Whereas, Just as companies now are expected to use best-practice security measures to protect their

employees, school administrators and security directors face enormous expectations regarding the safety of students; and

Whereas, According to the Third Annual National Association of School Resource Officers Survey (2003), 90 percent of respondents described their schools as “soft targets” for potential terrorist attacks; 55 percent said their schools' crises plans were inadequate; 62 percent said their crises plan had never been tested; and 71 percent reported that teachers, administrators, in-house security personnel and support staff have not received terrorism-specific training; and

Whereas, New York City is currently the largest city in the United States as well as one of the most vulnerable with regard to domestic security; and

Whereas, With approximately 1.1 million students that attend public schools in New York City and an additional 267,000 students that attend non-public schools, it is imperative that these children are safe and secure while in the educational system; and

Whereas, In New York, although there are minimum standards of school security such as requiring school safety plans for all schools, financial restraints keep most schools from maximizing additional safety measures; and

Whereas, Educational institutions are facing high financial and regulatory pressures since they are trying to protect themselves and their students from multiple safety issues such as alcohol abuse, assault, sexual misconduct, terrorism, natural disasters, blackouts and more; and

Whereas, The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has already directed federal funding for school security in other cities; after the Maryland governor requested additional flexibility from the federal DHS to provide some security to non-governmental organizations in the state, \$100,000 in federal funds was dedicated to improve security measures at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville; in West Paterson, NJ, the “Model School” program piloted at the Beatrice Gilmore School used \$100,000 in federal homeland

security funding for security upgrades including computerized cameras; in Danbury, CT, a \$287,000 federal grant will be used for an Internet-based system to alert parents during a crisis at school and the plan also includes placing cameras and defibrillators in more school buildings; and

Whereas, With respect to national security, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security can play an important role in easing the financial burdens on New York City private and public schools so that they may establish adequate security measures to protect their students; and

Whereas, Currently, the majority of federal homeland security funding is allocated for infrastructure protection, salaries and training for law enforcement members, information analysis, defense science and technology, and emergency preparedness facilitation including equipment procurement etc.; and

Whereas, As part of the department's goal to keep the U.S. safe, it should allocate homeland security funding for schools in vulnerable areas; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York urges the federal government to provide homeland security funding in order to ensure safety and security in all New York City schools.