



STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

PUBLIC HEARING

TESTIMONY OF

MICHAEL MABEE

VICE PRESIDENT

MARCH 28, 2012

Good Afternoon. I would like to thank the Board of Trustees for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Michael Mabee, and I am the Vice President - Chief Communications Officer and the Director of the New York State University Police Lieutenants Association for the Police Benevolent Association of New York State. The PBA of NYS is the new labor union representing more than 1,100 police officers in the State University Police, the New York State Environmental Conservation Police, The New York State Park Police, and the New York State Forest Rangers.

In consideration of the fact that I am limited to five minutes of time, I will get right into the heart of my comments, which centers on a life-and-death safety issue that is of extreme importance to this union, as well as the SUNY campus communities.

What I would like to bring to your attention is the fact that approximately one quarter of the SUNY campuses lack patrol rifles for responding to an active shooter. After the tragic shootings in 2007 at Virginia Tech, in which 32 people were savagely killed and 25 others were wounded, then SUNY Chancellor John J. Ryan commissioned a task force to examine critical incident management on SUNY campuses. The introduction to this 16 page report, issued just 3 1/2 weeks after the Virginia Tech shootings quoted Chancellor Ryan's testimony to the New York State Senate standing committee on higher education, which was given just two weeks after the shootings. I would like to read part of Chancellor Ryan's testimony:

....no single campus today can guarantee they can prevent situations like the one that occurred at Virginia Tech from ever occurring. However, that fact should not stop us from doing everything possible to reduce the likelihood of such an event and ensure the effectiveness of our responses if such an attack does take place.

Chancellor Ryan's sentiments were absolutely correct in 2007, and they are just as prudent in 2012. The Task Force report made several recommendations, and the one I would like to focus on was the list of weapons and safety equipment that each SUNY campus should have to

effectively respond to an active shooter, specifically the AR-15 rifles that were referenced on page 11 of the report. As a brief explanation, handguns and shotguns are effective weapons at close range, but rifles are needed by law enforcement for long range response. In fact, many campus shooters have been armed with rifles, so a SUNY campus' failure to arm its officers with rifles puts those at a severe disadvantage in protecting potential victims as well as in protecting themselves. Eight SUNY campuses, including (right here) the College at Brockport, do not have rifles available to its officers should there be a campus shooting. I hope you agree with me that this is clearly unacceptable five years after the tragic Virginia Tech shootings.

I've referenced Virginia Tech several times, but there unfortunately have been several more shootings before and after Virginia Tech. Just this past weekend, there was a fatal shooting at a Mississippi State University Dormitory, and earlier this month, two people were killed at the University of Pittsburg Medical Center. Back in November, on this very Brockport campus, a student who was evicted from the dormitories was stopped on campus and arrested for DWI. During the arrest proceedings, University Police Officers found a rifle in the trunk of his car with 500 rounds of ammunition. We don't know what, if anything, this subject intended, but the University Police Officers here at Brockport may very well have saved lives that evening.

We cannot emphasize enough how important it is for all, not 90%, not 95%, but 100% of SUNY campuses to follow the 2007 Task Force recommendations and ensure that each and every SUNY campus is properly equipped to respond to a campus shooter. Five years after Virginia Tech, 25% of the SUNY campuses are failing to follow the proactive recommendations that the task force provided. I am asking for the Board of Trustees help in ensuring all SUNY campuses remain safe. Ensuring the proper equipping of our University Police Officers, notably providing patrol rifles is a crucial component to that goal. Thank you.