



## **Partner Alliance for Safer Schools**

### **WHITE PAPER: Compliance in a Confusing World**

*The volunteers who make up the Partner Alliance for Safer Schools (PASS) bring together their research and expertise from the education, public safety, and industry communities to develop and support a coordinated approach to make effective use of proven security practices for schools. The PASS team is also dedicated to developing white papers on specific, school-safety topics.*

*The content in these white papers may point to specific products, brands, or organizations as illustrations of how certain safety and security measures are implemented. PASS does not endorse specific products or brands. Together, the volunteers and partners of the PASS share a single vision: making all schools safer is both achievable and urgently needed.*

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#### **AUTHORS**

Main Authors: PASS Technical Committee

#### **KEY TOPIC**

Compliance in a Confusing World

#### **PROBLEM SOLVED**

Educating policymakers and stakeholders to advance legislation, funding, and coordinated implementation that meaningfully enhances school security at both state and federal levels.

#### **RELEVANT PASS GUIDELINES SECTION**

- Classroom/Interior Perimeter Layer
- Policies & Procedures Component

#### **MOST RELEVANT FOR**

- K-12 security directors
- school administrators
- facilities leaders
- policymakers.

## **TIME TO READ**

Approximately 12 minutes

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## **Executive Summary**

This white paper accompanies the PASS webinar titled “Compliance in a Confusing World,” and is designed to help school administrators, facilities leaders, policymakers, and safety professionals understand the evolving legislative and technological landscape shaping K-12 school security.

Across the United States, lawmakers are advancing policies intended to improve emergency response, communication, and situational awareness in schools. Key efforts include the expansion of Alyssa’s Law, proposed federal standards through Alyssa’s Act, emerging digital mapping requirements, and considerations surrounding biometrics and artificial intelligence (AI).

While legislative intent is consistently centered on protecting students and staff, long-term success depends on:

- Sustainable funding
- Technical interoperability
- Lifecycle maintenance
- Training and operational planning
- Alignment with established best practices, such as PASS Guidelines

Effective school safety is not achieved through mandates alone. It requires coalition-driven coordination among policymakers, educators, safety professionals, and industry leaders to ensure solutions are practical, fundable, and durable in real-world environments.

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## **Why This Topic Matters**

As legislation accelerates nationwide, clarity and coordination are essential to ensure compliance efforts truly improve safety outcomes rather than create unfunded mandates or mandates that cannot easily be implemented without federal or state funding.

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## **Problems Solved**

By the end of this white paper, readers should be able to:

- Understand current state and federal school-safety legislative trends
  - Distinguish between Alyssa’s Law and Alyssa’s Act
  - Explain the purpose and policy considerations of digital mapping
  - Identify appropriate and responsible uses of biometrics and AI in schools
  - Locate funding pathways and collaborative resources that support implementation
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## **Section 1 — Safety Modernization Efforts:**

School safety modernization requires a coordinated life-safety ecosystem rather than reliance on any single device or mandate. Electronic security systems—including intrusion detection, access control, video surveillance, and emergency communications—must operate together within sustainable policy and funding frameworks.

Industry and advocacy organizations support:

- Engagement with lawmakers to clarify implementation realities
- Alignment of policy, funding, and infrastructure
- Emphasis on long-term maintenance and interoperability
- Expansion of federal and state grant funding for safety improvements

Federal initiatives continue to provide funding through Department of Justice (DOJ) programs and emerging school-safety grant opportunities, including those tied to post-incident federal reviews and foundational protections such as secure classroom doors and locks.

Modernization succeeds when policy intent translates into durable, workable solutions that function effectively in daily school operations.

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## **Section 2 — Alyssa’s Law & Alyssa’s Act:**

[Alyssa's Law](#) is school safety legislation known as the “panic button bill,” requiring public elementary and secondary schools to install silent panic alarms directly connected to local law enforcement. It aims to reduce emergency response times during a crisis. Named in memory of 14-year-old [Alyssa Alhadeff](#), a victim of the 2018 [Parkland, Florida shooting](#), the law has now been enacted in 10 states, with many additional states pursuing legislation.

Some states not only mandate panic buttons, but they also provide funding, which is the goal of Alyssa's Law. With this law, panic buttons are present in every classroom, including some that are wearable duress buttons for immediate correspondence with emergency services. The goal is to pass Alyssa's Law in every state. “The faster we can get help on the scene, the more lives we will save.”

Key principles include:

- Rapid emergency notification saves lives
- Wearable panic devices enable immediate staff activation
- Minimum safety standards should apply nationwide
- Funding alongside mandates is essential

**Alyssa's Act:** This act (HR-6809) requires each local educational agency (LEA), as a condition of establishing a minimum federal elementary and secondary education funds, to ensure that each elementary and secondary school served by the LEA is equipped with at least one silent panic alarm for use in a school security emergency. While a front desk panic button is installed by a 3rd party monitoring group who contacts the school and law enforcement, Alyssa's law implements direct notification of police so that school staff can get emergency response as rapidly as possible. Currently, laws in each state determine what technology is allowed. The goal is to create a standard for states to adopt into code when implementing Alyssa's Law while also giving them the flexibility to determine the best way to fund the program at the state or local level, or open up eligibility for grants. It appears as though the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) would be tasked with establishing standards. The bipartisan proposal aims to:

- Create consistent national expectations
- Support faster first-responder action
- Reduce loss of life during school emergencies

Ultimately, Alyssa's Act represents a shift from fragmented state-by-state requirements toward coordinated national preparedness. Alyssa's Act is a strong effort towards prevention of the next school shooting, or at the very least, mitigation of the loss of life with the passing of this act.

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### **Section 3—Digital Mapping, Biometrics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

## Digital Mapping

We are seeing quite a few trends around the country—a clear legislative interest in digital mapping. This is a software project, not an app, that puts all of your building maps, access points, and campus nuances into one, secure place. This can coincide with Alyssa’s Law, and provides secure, interactive campus blueprints accessible to first responders during emergencies, including:

- Building layouts
- Entrances and exits
- Critical infrastructure locations

Lawmakers want first responders to have better situational awareness when they encounter an incident, and digital mapping is proving essential. Legislative interest is rapidly increasing nationwide, however, policy maturity varies significantly. Major implementation challenges include a lack of preparedness when it comes to lifecycle maintenance requirements, unclear responsibility for updates to outdated building maps, funding gaps, and interoperability concerns.

The degree of policy maturity matters. Long-term success depends on sustainability, interoperability, training, and ongoing maintenance with these systems.

## Biometrics

Biometric technologies—such as facial matching for locating missing students or identifying prohibited individuals—present **targeted safety applications** when governed by clear policy and privacy protections.

Recent legislative debates highlight the importance of:

- Education on appropriate use cases
- Vendor-neutral expertise
- Restrictions that protect privacy while enabling safety benefits

Balanced policy enables responsible deployment aligned with school-safety goals.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI-enabled safety technologies—including wearable duress devices with video capability and enhanced situational awareness tools—are rapidly emerging.

Key considerations include:

- Transparency and ethics

- Data privacy
- Responsible governance
- Alignment with educational environments

AI is no longer theoretical; schools must now determine how to manage and regulate its use responsibly while maintaining safety as the primary objective.

## Other Initiatives and Resources

### Funding Opportunities

Multiple funding sources support school-safety implementation, including:

The [COPS \(Community Oriented Policing Services\) grant](#), administered by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), provides funding to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire, rehire, or train officers, focusing on community policing, crime prevention, and enhancing school safety. Grants support initiatives like technology upgrades, officer training, and specialized units.

[SchoolSafety.gov](#) also has a funding page. This is a great way to find out more about these funds.

SIA also has funding resources, which include specialized grants for security (e.g., [School Security Funding Guide](#), [DHS grants](#)), industrial heritage preservation (e.g., [DeLony Grants](#)), scientific research (e.g., [BRF Innovations Award](#)), and tax credit consulting (e.g., [SR&ED](#)). Key opportunities are often accessed through professional associations and federal agencies.

Awareness of application timelines and eligibility is essential to securing support.

### Student-Led Safety Culture

**Moss Clubs:** Establish a culture of safety. One example is creating a [MOSS \(Make Our Schools Safe\) Club](#), which is an in-school, student-led organization focused on building a culture of safety, kindness, and mental wellness. These clubs were founded in memory of Alyssa Alhadeff, to empower students to act as a "ground level" force for change, promoting measures like [Alyssa's Law](#), organizing, and advocating for safety improvements.

Student-driven safety initiatives—such as school-based safety clubs—help build peer engagement, mental-wellness, and mental health awareness, advocacy for protective legislation, and a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration.

These clubs empower the student voice to partake in enhancing prevention and preparedness.

### Nonprofit and Trade Association Roles

School safety benefits from collaboration between:

- **501(c)(3) nonprofits** focused on education, research, and awareness
- **501(c)(6) associations** advocating policy, standards, and industry implementation

Both structures are necessary to translate **awareness into actionable, sustainable safety policy**.

**501C3 and C6:** “501(c)(3) and 501(c)(6) are IRS designations for tax-exempt nonprofit organizations with different purposes: 501(c)(3)s are charitable, religious, or educational entities (e.g., charities, churches) where donations are tax-deductible. 501(c)(6)s are business leagues, chambers of commerce, or professional associations focused on improving common business interests, where dues are deductible as business expenses. Both can be used for school safety. Review notes to gather the similarities and differences.”

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## Conclusion

School safety progress depends on proactive collaboration rather than reactive response. Technology, expertise, and policy momentum already exist. The remaining challenge is alignment—ensuring legislation, funding, operational planning, and leading practices work together in practice, not just in theory.

Coalitions among educators, policymakers, and industry partners are essential to establish sustainable funding, implement interoperable safety systems, maintain long-term operational readiness, and prevent tragedies.

Effective loss prevention should not follow tragedy. By acting now—through coordinated policy, informed implementation, and shared responsibility—safer schools are achievable.

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## Resources

- [Passk12.org](https://passk12.org)—Layers 4 & 5
- [Schoolsafety.gov](https://schoolsafety.gov) funding resources
- Make Our Schools Safe, [makeourschoolssafe.org](https://makeourschoolssafe.org)
- ESA and SIA school safety advocacy materials