**MEMORANDUM**

May 14, 2018; Revised: June 1, 2018

To: Patrick Audet, Associate Director Kirk Miller, Ed. D., Executive Director

From: Gregory Dern, Ed. D.

Re: Preliminary Summary of Findings and Implications

Below is a draft of preliminary findings and implications. The survey was meant to explore preferences about making an advocacy statement either in support of or against arming school personnel, especially teachers. The survey did not seek preferences for arming school personnel. This is an important distinction.

A trend in the data may suggest that making a statement before more is understood by school leadership about methods of prevention and disruption is not in the best interest of SAM. Likewise, that while it may be important to advocate contemporaneous to national events, the content of advocacy is remains uncertain. These two ideas lead to the recommendation that a statewide school violence advisory group may help to assemble and interpret information about prevention and disruption strategies thereby shifting a focus onto the needs of constituent groups to develop greater understandings about what a safe school means.

***Preliminary Summary of Findings***

The survey was distributed to all MASS members, and the response rate was approximately 30%. The survey demonstrated that 62% of the respondents did not think it was in the interest of SAM to make a statement for or against arming school personnel, especially teachers, on Montana K-12 campuses. Additional exploration of the survey data showed that 94% of the C-Class districts reported not having a SRO, whereas 67% of the A-Class districts reported having a SRO. Furthermore, 97% of those districts with law enforcement response times of greater than ten minutes (e. g., response times in excess of one hour), also reported not having a SRO.

 Further explorations of data showed that while there were those against making a statement (i. e., 62%) and those for making a statement (i. e., 38%), there were differences between the two groups based on preferences for making statements contemporaneous with national events. Following that it was earlier found that more school district superintendents believe that it is not in the interest of SAM/MASS to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel, which group of people believe this more? In other words, of the two groups of district superintendents – (a) those who believe that advocacy statements should be contemporaneous to national events, and (b) those who believe the timing advocacy statements should be independent of national events – which believes more that it is not in the best interest of SAM to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel?

* 91.7% of those who believe the timing of advocacy statements should be independent of national events believe that it is not in the best interest of SAM to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel.
* 46.8% of those who believe that advocacy statements should be contemporaneous to national events believe that it is not in the interest of SAM to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel.

Of the all the people who believe that that it is in the best interest of SAM to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel, what percent are also of those who believe that advocacy statements should be contemporaneous to national events?

* 92.6% of those who believe that advocacy statements should be contemporaneous to national events also believe that it is in the interest of SAM to make a statement for or against the arming of school personnel.

The specific questions should make us reflect on the associations in an effort to draw preliminary conclusions. For example, there are strongly held preferences for and against making advocacy statements, however, the difference between such preferences rests upon the role that the influence of national events plays in association with any such preference. Those who are not otherwise swayed by national events believe that it is not in the interest of SAM to make a statement contemporaneous with such events. While this group represents the majority of those surveyed, of those who believe that it is in the interest of SAM to make a statement are strongly influenced by national events. A breakdown of response associations shows three groups of respondents. First, there is the group - the majority group - that believes that it is not in the interest of SAM to make a statement and especially so given national events. Second, there is the group that also believes it is not in the interest of SAM to make a statement, but considers it important to make statements contemporaneous to national events. Lastly, there is the group - the minority group - that believes making a statement contemporaneous to national events is most desirable, and in the interest of SAM.

While it is important to report the majority opinion and minority opinion, it is also important to further explore the "middle" group - the group that believes it is not in the interest of SAM to make a statement, but who also consider responses to national events as necessary for some reason, or the other, so that the dimensions of preferences are inclusive of varying associations.

***Implications***

 While these findings are preliminary, they may point to the difficulty of what is means to have safe schools. One the one hand, it is important to develop safety policies, which are current with trends. On the other hand, policies, which, for example, include prevention, training, and crisis preparation, may not reconcile the differences between preventing an attack on a school and disruption of an active shooter because of the relative shock and randomness involved with the latter. The threat assessment literature points to informational gathering as a method to assist in determining the type of threat and possibly imminence of violence. Nevertheless, the survey results may point to a greater need for additional information about safe schools, preparedness and preventive measures, and relationships between information gathering and disruption. Enhanced understandings may help to inform policy advocacy statements by framing them in best-practices and new, composite understandings of the differences between prevention strategies and disruption strategies.