

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**Excerpts from the School Security Reports
Submitted to the Maine Department of Education
January, 2014**

Pursuant to Resolves 2013, chapter 76

The full reports from Safe Havens International and PDT Architects are confidential records and not subject to public disclosure pursuant to the Maine Freedom of Access Act (1 MRSA §402(3)(L)).

Safe Havens International Report (Michael Dorn)

1. Executive Summary

As we find in many of our school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessment projects, there are a number of positive safety practices in Maine schools. At the same time, as we have found during every assessment project across the nation and in other countries, there are numerous opportunities for improvement.

We feel that it is of considerable importance at this point to mention that effective school safety efforts cannot be focused intently on extraordinarily rare but catastrophic mass casualty school attacks. Though these tragic incidents cause immense fear and garner wide media attention, they do not represent the majority of deaths and injuries in American schools. As Dr. Dewey Cornell and other respected researchers have documented, the idea that school violence is rampant with a dramatic rise of homicides is a common myth. In our opinion, this myth is a deadly one which has likely resulted in billions of dollars in wasted taxpayer dollars and numerous avoidable deaths in our nation's schools.

This report is much more comprehensive in approach and attempts to address the rare but catastrophic active shooter situations along with the types of safety incidents that have killed far more school children and employees. Many of the opportunities for improvement found in this report can help reduce common concerns such as bullying while also reducing risks associated with mass casualty incidents. For example, efforts to improve student supervision can reduce the frequency and severity of bullying while also making it possible to more rapidly and effectively shelter students from hazardous materials incidents or an active shooter.

The assessment involved a blended approach drawing upon school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments that have been conducted in the state of Maine by Safe Havens International (SHI), the results of state-wide stakeholder surveys, the review of a considerable number of documents and electronic resources, meetings with a wide array of stakeholders and more recent site visits to representative schools in Maine.

While we have identified opportunities for improvement that relate to facilities improvements and the acquisition of improved school security technologies, the reader will also note an emphasis on opportunities for improvement that involve our most reliable protective resource – the dedicated school employees of Maine. We try to emphasize the importance of preparing people as well as buildings when it comes to safety, security and emergency preparedness. Upgrades of school security and emergency management technologies can and frequently are rendered nearly useless when school staff do not support them with appropriate practices. Just as the security of an entire school can be compromised by a single school employee propping a door open with a rock, the failure to support security technologies with solid people practices is a very pervasive problem. For this reason, this report will place considerable emphasis on a blend of facility design, security technologies and much attention to things that school and public safety officials can do to improve safety. The report includes a special emphasis on ways to improve emergency preparedness because this is often our best opportunity to reduce the mass casualty loss of human life. Simply having a lockdown protocol and conducting lockdown drills by no means assures that the average school teacher, custodian or school receptionist has

been properly prepared to protect themselves from an aggressor any more than having nine monthly but improperly conducted fire drills will prevent deaths in a fire. Ninety-five students and staff lost their lives in 1958 proving this to us yet the majority of schools in the United States still conduct fire drill processes that allowed these 95 deaths to occur. The monthly fire drills conducted at that school inadvertently conditioned teachers to wait until an administrator had pulled the fire alarm before they evacuated. As a result, not one employee pulled the fire alarm for an estimated five minutes after the fire was detected by a teacher. This event demonstrates clearly how powerful the negative effects of life and death stress can be. Yet presently, most Maine schools like their counterparts in the other 49 states still rely on fire drills where a school administrator pulls the fire alarm each month.

This report will provide a series of simple yet critical observations that can help make Maine schools safer, more pleasant and more effective places of learning. The report includes a number of opportunities for consideration including what we feel is the most important – the creation of a Maine School Safety Center. In our opinion, the creation of such a center could achieve more improvement in the safety and effectiveness for Maine schools than billions of dollars in security upgrades. While there are many important and legitimate opportunities for improvements that would require funding for specific schools, the impact of a properly operated state school safety center could help make far more schools safer in relation to the cost of such an approach.

We at Safe Havens consider it an honor and have found it to be a true pleasure to be allowed to assist in this worthwhile project. We hope our efforts prove to be helpful to you in your efforts to protect the most precious of Maine's abundant natural resources – the children and educators of Maine.

2. Purpose of the Report

The Maine Department of Education (the Department) was tasked by the Maine State Legislature to conduct an assessment of school security using existing funding. The Department contacted Safe Havens International (SHI) in September, 2013, and requested a written proposal for a school safety, security, and emergency management assessment for overall school security in the state of Maine. SHI developed an initial proposal designed to reduce the cost of the project by assessing a sampling of schools across the state.

The Department did not have adequate budget to utilize this approach. After a series of discussions a modified scope of work was developed to reduce the cost of the project to fit within the budget available to the Department. SHI is a non-profit organization and also agreed to perform the majority of its work on a pro bono basis. The leadership team from SHI is grateful to the members of the SHI team who were willing to work on this project on a pro bono basis in spite of a particularly heavy workload. The analysts who performed this work have regularly been working seven days a week for months at a time and their generosity of time has been nothing short of inspiring.

As a result, a modified approach which would utilize a blend of the following to conduct the assessment:

- Security assessments of representative schools conducted by Portland Design Team (PDT) Architects, a Maine Architectural firm with extensive experience in K12 school building and renovation projects. An architect from the firm participated in school site visits with SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn in November, 2013, to learn school safety assessment concepts that SHI analysts have found to be important. The findings from this process are outlined in detail in an independent report prepared by PDT Architects.
- A series of online surveys focused on different disciplines relating to school safety, security and emergency preparedness;
- A review by SHI analysts of existing data available from the Department and stakeholder organizations;
- A summary of observations of school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments of Maine schools conducted by SHI analysts in the last several years;
- A summary of relevant observations of school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments conducted across the nation by SHI analysts in the last several years;
- A summary of relevant observations by SHI analysts during five previous state-wide school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness projects;
- Site visits at two public schools in Maine by a multidisciplinary team consisting of SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn, architect Lyndon Keck from PDT Architects and representatives from the Maine Department of Education to compare different assessment methodologies in November, 2013;
- A series of meetings with a variety of stakeholder groups including representatives from: Maine State Police, Maine Emergency Management Agency, Maine Department of Education, Office of the State Fire Marshall, the Maine National Association of Social Workers, Maine School Facilities Directors, Maine Education Association, Maine Superintendent's Association, The Maine School Board's Association, Maine School Management Association, the Maine Principal's Association, PDT Architects and Safe Havens International in November, 2013.

The assessment project was focused on identifying opportunities to improve safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness in Maine schools by identifying opportunities for improvement at the local and state level.

For sake of easier readability, we will typically refer to public school districts throughout this report. However, we feel it is crucial to note that the majority of the references in this report have equal implications for non-public schools. The reader should be aware that the most lethal attack at a K12 school in the history of our nation occurred at a non-public school. More children and staff were killed in this single incident than the attacks at Sandy Hook Elementary School,

Columbine High School, Red Lake High School and at Pearl High School combined. The deadly fire attack on the Our Lady of Angels Sacred Hearts School in Chicago left 95 dead and destroyed a school building. SHI analysts have worked extensively with Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish, Baptist, Independent, Charter and other nonpublic schools across the United States and in other countries. We feel strongly that these schools face many of the same challenges as their public school counterparts as well as some other unique challenges not faced by the typical public school. We urge the reader to consider the safety of the students and employees of these schools were safety should be no less of a priority.

3. Perspective of Our Analysts

The tragic mass casualty school shooting in Newtown Connecticut has prompted a vigorous and at times fever-pitch effort to make American schools safer. While many positive improvements have been made, SHI analysts and many other school safety experts have concerns that some efforts have been ineffective. In some cases, efforts to improve safety may actually increase the danger to students and staff.

Hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent on measures that have never been proven to be effective. For example, thousands of students and school employees have been provided various types of training on attacking gunmen using variety of theoretical models that have never been independently and properly tested to see if they work. As at least two students have been shot and wounded and at least six school employees have been shot and killed attempting to confront armed individuals in K12 schools thus far, many school safety experts question these approaches. Though these and other untested approaches are gaining popularity, many schools have still not adopted approaches that are far less controversial and that have been demonstrated to work. For example, evidence-based de-escalation training programs have been proven to reduce assaults on school employees with decades of research to back up their effectiveness. A primary concern our analysts have is that efforts driven too much by fear and emotion can result in implementation of what “may work” before application of concepts that have been demonstrated to work to make schools safer.

We are pleased that the legislature and the Department have opted for a rational approach where problems are defined through evaluation before large scale solutions are determined. While educators, parents, students, public safety officials, legislators and others want our schools to be safer as quickly as possible, we have seen time and time again that hastily implemented measures in the wake of high-profile school shootings result in less safe schools as well as waste of precious fiscal resources.

SHI was tasked with providing a frank and direct assessment report. The Department has been clear that they are open to this level of external audit and have specifically asked that any opportunities for improvement in the Department’s approaches to school safety be evaluated as well as those of other state agencies and local communities. As the reader will see, our report includes such findings at all levels in the State of Maine.

Due to the nature of this type of analysis, negative findings (“problems”) tend to be highlighted more than the positive aspects. At the same time, our analysts make reasonable efforts to seek out, identify, quantify, and highlight successes that were observed during the assessment project. **With this in mind, it is important to remember that the nature of the**

assessment process is to accentuate the areas where gaps have been identified and to note opportunities for improvement. Therefore, our approach is to give a critical, problem-seeking perspective – a view that can help our clients make changes to reduce the likelihood that tragic school safety incidents will occur.

In our experience, seeking out and addressing these opportunities for improvement can provide a number of benefits. The primary goal is to improve school security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness. A secondary goal is the growth and enhancement of community support for schools in a sustainable manner. Building upon existing community support to foster a strong partnership will provide added benefits that appear and increase over time. These types of improvements can also lead to long term improvements in academic achievement and overall quality in the district.

The take-away from this prologue is that the assessment process should be seen as a highly positive endeavor in itself. Our experience in the school safety field has shown us that schools are more likely to experience injuries and deaths of students and staff after a crisis event when safety strategies are not based on assessment processes.

As school leaders naturally focus a great deal on test scores, reductions in dropout rates and other key measures of school effectiveness, it is very common for people to underestimate the connections between safety, security, and emergency preparedness with these primary goals. Our analysts feel that implementing the improvements outlined in this report will not only bear valuable fruit through a reduction in risk to life safety, but will enhance school climate and academic achievement by reduction in loss of time on task for teachers, lost instructional time for students and loss of time spent by building and district level administrators.

4. Methodology and Limitations

Seven of the thirty six analysts from SHI assisted in this assessment process. The biographies for these analysts are included in Appendix V. Below are the type of assessment processes we conducted for this project:

- **A review of findings from our on-site school safety, security, and emergency management assessments for three Maine school districts conducted in the last several years:** These assessments were conducted by SHI analysts Dr. Sonayia Shepherd, Chris Dorn, Russell Bentley, Phuong Nguyen and SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn. The analysts used a combination of observational tours, interviews, and a standardized checklist that focuses on physical security, safety and emergency preparedness during the original assessments. These assessments included the school grounds, building exteriors, main office areas, library/media centers, cafeteria/food preparation areas, auditoriums, gymnasiums, locker rooms, shower areas, offices, science labs, utility areas (boiler rooms, storage areas, mechanical rooms, etc.) and a representative sampling of classrooms, as well as other unique and/or relevant spaces.

The analysts also used a series of video and text-based crisis scenarios to evaluate the level of preparedness of staff members at the assessed schools. An average of two staff members were chosen from each school. Some staff were pre-selected and some were

randomly chosen based on staff availability. Each participant was shown a selection of two to six scenarios for evaluation based on the interviewee's time constraints. The responses of participating staff were scored using an assessment tool developed by SHI that reflects appropriate critical action steps that must be initiated in the first critical 30 seconds of a crisis event in order to be effective.

- **On-site assessment meetings:** During his on-site visit in November, 2013, SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn had a series of meetings with representatives from: Maine State Police, Maine Emergency Management Agency, Maine Department of Education, Office of the State Fire Marshall, the Maine National Association of Social Workers, Maine School Facilities Directors, Maine Education Association, Maine Superintendent's Association, the Maine School Board's Association, Maine School Management Association, the Maine Principal's Association, and PDT Architects. These meetings afforded us a better understanding of challenges faced and available resources for school safety in the State of Maine. These meetings also helped our understanding of the unique culture of the State of Maine.

- **Online school safety, security and emergency preparedness surveys:** SHI developed a series of surveys for key stakeholder groups. The online surveys were conducted for school superintendents, law enforcement executives, fire chiefs and county emergency management directors. These surveys were intentionally concise as our experience has been that longer surveys result in lower response rates. The Department verified that this had been a concern in past assessment projects. We and the Department were pleasantly surprised to see high response rates from school superintendents and local emergency managers.

- **An off-site assessment of the Maine Emergency Management Agency *Model School Emergency Management Plan*:** This assessment was conducted by SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn. This study compares the current sample emergency management plan developed by the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) against the all-hazard, school crisis planning models recommended by the United States Department of Education (the ED). This planning resource was developed by MEMA in 2008.

- **An off-site assessment as well as conference call discussions relating to the *Public School Standards and Guidelines for New School Construction and Major Renovation Projects* guide published by the Maine Department of Education School Facilities Services Department in October 2012:** This evaluation was conducted by SHI Executive Director Michael Dorn in November, 2013.

- **A review of the following documents:**

- The *Maine School Safety and Security Report* prepared by PDT Architects
- School Safety Information on the Maine Department of Education Website
- Information on the 2013 Vigilant Guard Exercise Coordinated by the Maine National Guard
- A compilation of Maine Statutes relating to school safety
- A compilation of news articles relating to school safety in Maine

**Considerations for Improvement
(from the Safe Havens International/ Dorn Report)**

- Develop a comprehensive and reliable crisis plan
- Involve all school employees in the crisis plan
- Develop functional protocols (who performs what function) for emergencies
- Incorporate NIMS in emergency plans
- Incorporate planning for special needs students in plans
- Plan for mass casualty events
- Develop a family reunification plan
- Develop a Maine School Safety Center
- Develop emergency planning templates
- Develop emergency rules in the template
- Develop a mental health recovery template through MEMA
- Develop a site-specific planning template through MEMA
- Maine School Safety Center to develop staff development plan
- Practice training and drills (emergency)
- Train all employees in NIMS
- Train staff on de-escalation techniques
- Develop multi-discipline threat assessment team at the local level
- Improve student supervision
- Improve access control in schools
- Improve visitor screening techniques

- Upgrade protocols at school entrances
- Improve door locking mechanisms
- Close off or lock unsupervised spaces
- Create emergency photo tours of buildings
- Improve emergency diagrams in schools
- Improve intercom systems, where needed
- Install duress alarm buttons
- Add “consent to search” signs at all schools
- Number and mark all building exits
- Mark all rooms by numbers or symbols only

PDT Architects Report (Lyndon Keck)

Methodology

PDT Architects surveyed fifteen schools over a period of five days in November and December 2013. Schools were selected in consultation with the Maine Department of Education with the intent of producing a survey that would represent a range of sizes, age level groupings, and geographic locations across the State of Maine.

The fifteen schools were spread out over eight counties from Aroostook in the North, down to York in the south; and from Washington County in the East to Oxford County in the West. The eight counties included York, Cumberland, Washington, Aroostook, Waldo, Oxford, Penobscot, and Kennebec.

Schools were selected to give a range of school-age grouping, pre-K to 12th grade.

The distribution of school types included six high schools, four middle schools, three elementary schools, and two K-8 schools.

Two schools were located in urban areas, eight schools in medium-sized towns with a population of 5-7,000, and five schools in small towns of 800-2,500.

The school governance for the fifteen schools was as follows:

- Three (3) schools were part of municipal school departments
- Ten (10) schools were part of RSUs or SADs
- One (1) school was a Maine Indian Educational school
- One (1) school was an unorganized territory school (EUT)

A school safety and security survey was developed before the visitations began in November. The survey included topics and questions with contributions from the Maine Department of Education, PDT Architects, Safe Havens International, and various school safety websites. The survey was developed by PDT Architects, which takes full responsibility for its contents.

The survey includes questions in six categories:

1. Site Security
2. Visitor Access and Main Office Design
3. Building Security Systems
4. Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)
5. Building Supervision and Zoning
6. Classroom Safety

All school surveys were done by the same architect between November 26, 2013 and December 11, 2013.

The Department of Education called all school systems prior to the architect's visit. All school districts were assured that the sites chosen and the results of the individual school surveys

would be kept confidential and would not be published in an effort to keep all security issues confidential as required by LD 905.

Site visits involved the architect meeting with the principal and the administrative assistant and asking questions of teachers and staff members. The architect walked through the interior of the school as well as around the outside of the school at each location.

Recommendations for Improvement in Security, Listed by Priority (PDT/Keck Report)

The following is a list of recommendations for implementing school security improvements. It has included items in three different priority levels. In a perfect world every school in the State of Maine would be able to implement each of the security recommendations in all three priority levels. However, with limited resources this report recommends that schools strive to implement all of the items in the Priority 1 list as a good first step in providing a minimum level of preparedness.

Priority 1 items provide a minimum level of security for schools:

- a) Numbering exterior doors with large, 12" high permanent letters or numbers.
- b) Clearing landscaping adjacent to entrance doors a minimum of 15 feet from each side.
- c) Making exterior propane gas tanks code-compliant with a minimum of 10 feet away from glass windows or doors.
- d) Locking all exterior perimeter doors at the start of school and keeping them locked while students are in the building.
- e) Providing an exterior public address system to be heard at all playground areas and outdoor fields during school hours.
- f) Providing two-way battery-operated radios in the administrative area for staff use when supervising bus loading and unloading and for adults supervising playground areas and lunch duty. All custodians should also have two-way radios available at all times.
- g) Designing all schools with a security vestibule with at least one line of locked doors requiring supervised access by an administrator.
- h) Providing all schools with a system of permanent visitor badges that are accounted for at the end of the day and are changed, in terms of color and design, every year.
- i) Projecting a safe school character that reinforces family and community values.
- j) Providing an intercom system throughout the building that can be heard in classrooms, libraries, cafeterias, gymnasiums, and areas where students work.

- k) Practicing at least one designated emergency responder location with emergency responders and staff.
- l) Providing a lock-down protocol in EOPs (Emergency Operation Plans) and crisis plans.
- m) Empowering all main office administrative assistants to call for a lock down if the principal or assistant principal are not immediately available to make split-second decisions.
- n) Training school-wide staff for the crisis plan including part-time specialists, custodians, kitchen help, and emergency responders.
- o) Providing all EOPs and crisis plans with a reverse evacuation plan.
- p) Providing all EOPs and crisis plans with off-site family reunification plans.
- q) Providing paper copies of all EOPs and crisis plans in all classrooms and in all staff members' possession.
- r) Providing all EOPs and crisis plans with small-scale floor plans of the building with room numbers.
- s) Providing all classroom doors with hardware so teachers can lock them from the inside.
- t) Connecting all classrooms to the central intercom system.
- u) Designing schools with portable classrooms and separate campus plan buildings so that no more than two exterior doors are dedicated as main building entrance doors. Those doors should be kept locked except during class period changes when the doors are unlocked and manned by adult staff members.

Priority 2 items that should be implemented when possible:

- a) Turning off school bus engines during loading and unloading of students.
- b) Investing in "real time" security video cameras that can be viewed by at least two different monitors.
- c) Using a taped video camera security system with a loop length of a minimum of 14 days.

- d) Locating central offices so they have easy visual supervision of the main entrance and main corridor.
- e) Providing at least two or three different directions for exiting out of the cafeteria.
- f) Equipping all classrooms with a phone as part of a central phone system.

Priority 3 items that should be implemented when funds permit:

- a) Investing in proximity card readers for all staff with access through no more than three doors.
- b) Breaking all buildings into at least three separate security zones with doors that can be manually or electronically closed and locked.
- c) Providing all classrooms with heavy-duty, commercial grade door hardware with keyed functions on both sides of the door.
- d) Designing all classrooms with at least one window large enough for all students to be able to use as an escape window.

Stakeholders

Group 1 Educators

- Maine Education Association: Lois Kilby-Chesley
 - Maine Education Association: Rob Walker
 - Maine Principals' Association: Kim Buckheit
 - Maine Principals' Association: Dick Durost
 - Maine School Management Association (MSMA): Ed Antz
 - Maine School Management Association (MSMA): Connie Brown
 - Maine School Management Association (MSSA): Brent Colbry
 - Maine School Management Association (MSBA): Becky Fles
 - Worked with many Maine school systems doing security studies and recommendations
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- Met at Maine School Management Conference Room on November 14th 2013
 - Very good feedback, interest, and cooperation
 - Schools get conflicting information on how to handle school security concerns
 - Acknowledged that there is a need for staff training and facilities improvements
 - Acknowledged that there are concerns and vulnerabilities in schools statewide
 - Also acknowledged that there is a sense that people feel critical incidents "could never happen here"
 - Specifically asked to remain involved as report moved forward and beyond if something came out of the Education Committee

Group 2 Emergency Responders

- Maine Emergency Management Agency: Dwane Hubert
 - Maine Emergency Management Agency: Deb Coucher
 - Maine National Association of Social Workers: Lana Pelletier
 - Maine National Association of Social Workers: Jack Sarmanian
 - Maine Office of State Fire Marshall: Rich McCarthy, Assistant State Fire Marshall
 - Maine Office of State Fire Marshall: Joseph Thomas, State Fire Marshal
 - Maine School Facilities Directors: Nelson Baillargeon (RSU 17 and EPMA)
 - Maine School Facilities Directors: Russ Brigham (South Portland)
 - Maine State Police: Sargent Patrick Hood
 - Maine State Police: Sargent Peter Michaud
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- Met at Maine School Management Conference Room on November 14th 2013
 - Good group that would like to work together in improving safety plans and coordination between groups
 - Identified the need for consistent school safety information and best practices
 - Identified that a state model for all hazards school emergency plan is needed
 - School Boards play a large role and would benefit from improved templates and coordinated efforts and documents that have had input from first responders
 - Agreed there is significant need for training, teacher workshops, awareness training, etc

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
TWO THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

H.P. 629 - L.D. 905

Resolve, Directing the Department of Education To Examine School Security

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, it is crucial to school safety to ensure the Department of Education has sufficient time to collect information and develop recommendations regarding school security by January 15, 2014; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1. Department of Education to examine school security. Resolved: That the Department of Education shall gather information from school administrative units regarding the preparedness of schools to implement required emergency management plans and the present condition of school facilities in terms of facility security in the event of an emergency. The department, based on the information collected and in consultation with appropriate security experts, shall evaluate school preparedness and facility security and shall develop recommendations for prudent measures that may be taken to improve preparedness and facility security. The department shall report its findings and recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs by January 15, 2014. The department shall ensure that information collected or compiled relating to security plans, security procedures and risk assessments is protected from public disclosure in accordance with the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 1, section 402, subsection 3, paragraph L and is presented in its report in a manner that allows for assessment of deficiencies without revealing any information that could jeopardize the security of schools. The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs may report out a bill relating to the subject matter of the report to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature; and be it further

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. Resolved: That the following appropriations and allocations are made.

EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF

School Finance and Operations Z078

Initiative: Provides one-time funds for the costs associated with contracting with security experts to evaluate school preparedness and facility security.

GENERAL FUND	2013-14	2014-15
All Other	\$49,750	\$0
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	<u>\$49,750</u>	<u>\$0</u>

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.