



# Prosecutor Issues Statement on School Threats

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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To the parents of all Warren County students:

I implore you to review and discuss this statement with your school-aged children.

Over the past year, the Warren County Prosecutor's Office has prosecuted at least 17 juveniles for school-related threats toward school facilities themselves, teachers, and their fellow students. These threats have come in various forms including verbal, notes, writings on restroom walls, social media postings, and actual possession of weapons on school grounds. In addition to these 17 charged juveniles, there have been several other incidents this year involving threats to school facilities where the individual responsible for making the threat has not yet been charged. Lately, these threats have become a daily occurrence. Yesterday, a bomb threat forced an evacuation of Lebanon High School. Also yesterday, a Springboro Community Schools student was taken into custody for threatening a school shooting. And today, another threat of a school shooting has again forced the evacuation of Lebanon High School.

Fortunately, law enforcement determined that most of these threats had not developed beyond the making of the threatening statements. However, in all of these incidents, a significant amount of law enforcement resources was expended to investigate the seriousness of each threat. Neither the school districts nor law enforcement has any way of distinguishing between a credible threat, a troubled student simply acting out, or a "bad joke." As the recent shooting at Madison High School demonstrates, these incidents can happen anywhere at any time, and therefore the school districts and law enforcement must treat each threat as if the safety of all students is at risk. In doing so, the education of our students is put on hold, and law enforcement personnel are pulled away from their daily efforts to keep our community safe.

For these reasons, our office treats threats of school-related violence very seriously. Charges against the aforementioned 17 juveniles have included Inducing Panic (School Grounds) and Illegal Conveyance of Weapons (School Grounds) – both felony-level offenses. The protocol that our office has recommended to all Warren County law enforcement agencies is that a juvenile who is discovered engaging in this type of conduct will be charged with a felony-level

offense. The juvenile will be immediately arrested and taken to Warren County Juvenile Detention Center, where the Court will hold the child until mental health professionals are able to conduct a risk assessment on the juvenile. Additionally, if found guilty of the offense(s), our office is recommending a sentence of *at least* 90 days in the Juvenile Detention Center, in addition to whatever discipline the school district issues. This policy will be enforced regardless of whether the threat is subsequently determined to be credible, or simply a bad joke. Our patience has run thin. Enough is enough.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for our local school districts, their administration, teachers, and staff for their efforts to address situations involving threats against schools. In these cases, our school districts' personnel really are the "first responders."

As a parent myself of school-aged children, I understand each parent's apprehension when these types of incidents occur, and their desire to quickly obtain information from the school district. With today's technology, students are able to relay to their parents in real-time that "something" is happening, without knowing the complete facts. Parents are always going to receive these communications more quickly than they will receive communication from the school districts, and that information is typically relayed via social media instantaneously.

Please note that in the few minutes after a threat is received, the school districts' first priorities are (1) insuring the safety of all students; and (2) assisting law enforcement with our investigative efforts to ascertain the culprit and eliminate any ongoing safety issues. As soon thereafter as possible, the school districts will then notify parents with current, accurate information as to what is occurring. Quick communication with parents is a goal, but it cannot come at the expense of the first priority in those few moments after a threat is made, which is to protect the children who might be at risk.



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