

Good afternoon Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, members of the Committee.

My name is Rick Amweg. I have over 35 years of experience working on safety and security related matters in the secondary and post-secondary education environments. I am here today to participate in this roundtable discussion and specifically discuss the effects of harassment, intimidation, bullying (including cyber bullying) and hazing on the post-secondary learning environment and how campuses can develop and improve awareness and prevention efforts and positively impact safety for their students.

There are various definitions of bullying, hazing and related activities. Most experts agree there are three conditions that must be present for activity to be defined as bullying: 1) An imbalance of power: people who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves; 2) Intent to cause harm: actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm; and 3) Repetition: incidents of bullying happen to the same the person over and over by the same person or group. This definition is supported by the US Department of Education and Bullying.gov.

Harassment, intimidation, bullying and hazing are often times thought of as occurring only in the elementary and secondary (K-12) school environments. Until recently, most research in this area has focused on students in this environment. Studies now show that bullying and related activities as well as cyberbullying does not end with high school. Some reports indicate that nearly 25 percent of college students are victims or bullying or hazing.

It is important to understand these definitions in the context in which they are applied. In the elementary and secondary school environments these activities are generally prohibited by rule and administrative process. Once individuals reach the age of 18, different protections are provided to victims by law and laws now address the illegal behavior of perpetrators. Part of the problem stems from the different way bullying and related activities are defined in educational systems. Some behaviors typically labeled as bullying in high school are not treated similarly in college. Findings from a recent US Department of Education study showed that when bullying and hazing do occur in college, the consequences for the perpetrators are often harsher than for younger students, who are less likely to face legal repercussions.

Two approaches to this issue need to be considered: Prevention and Response.

Some measures, such as training programs for campus staff that interact with students, bystander intervention programs, and awareness and familiarity training could impact the prevalence of bullying, hazing and related activities on campuses. Changing behaviors and attitudes toward bullying and hazing are also important aspects of prevention-focused programming. Colleges and universities already implement similar programs in other areas, such as sexual and intimate partner violence awareness and prevention programs. Applying these principles to bullying and hazing prevention is a logical step.

From the response perspective, most, if not all states have statutes that address bullying and hazing activities. Similarly, most colleges and universities have policies and guidelines related to bullying and

hazing activities. Some campuses address the issue within the context of harassment in general. For example, any action that falls generally under the definition of bullying or hazing would be considered a violation of the student code of conduct and would be dealt with through the student judicial process. Typically, students found responsible and in violation will be subject to immediate disciplinary action. Some institutions include suspension as part of that disciplinary process. Any case of bullying or hazing that is determined to be of a violation of criminal statutes can be referred to campus or local law enforcement authorities.

Our efforts today, and through the continued work of this committee should be to identify ways to positively impact the learning experience on our campuses by reducing incidents of bullying and hazing, raise awareness of these activities on our campuses, identify existing and promising prevention programs, and ensure that the application of existing statutes and conduct rules apply to these situations.

Thank you. I look forward to the forthcoming dialog on preventing and responding to harassment, intimidation, bullying and hazing on our college and university campuses.