

Comments in Concurrence with Bluffton Village Council RESOLUTION 20-2022

In response to the resolution in which the Village of Bluffton provides a fulltime officer to the local public school system I want to make some concurring statements.

As a community we are blessed with a strong sense of cooperation and collaboration. We have hundreds of volunteers in Bluffton who serve numerous civic organizations. These groups work tirelessly to improve the lives and opportunities of people in our area. When Bluffton Schools asked the Village to cooperate in providing a police officer to be present on the grounds during school sessions the impulse of our council was immediately positive.

I applaud this characteristic of our community. When one organization asks another to help create more safety and assurance to the children of our community then we work together on accomplishing that goal.

What I want to call our attention to even while voting in favor of this resolution, is why we feel the need to place an armed officer in our school. I have called this need to try to protect our children with weapons the great shame of our society. We know of many measures we could take to reduce the likelihood of school shootings, but the only action we are willing to do is place someone with a gun where they might be able to respond to violence with more shooting. Note, that in Uvalde, Texas over 300 armed officers did not stop the suicidal shooter before 21 people died.

School shooters are almost always young people who have experienced some combination of bullying, abuse, neglect, and suicidal thoughts. And while the home is one place these traumas may happen, the school is the other likely place. And the school is where we as a community can become aware and active in helping persons in this kind of distress. Have we as a society invested in serving and supporting young people, most of whom will never commit a shooting, but who nevertheless suffer mental anguish and social ostracism? There are a ton of reasons why committing mental health resources to schools would help our youth, the future of our country. But we cannot unite to do it. And that is one measure of our great shame.

Thank you for listening,

Mitch Kingsley