



December 15, 2021

St. Mary's County Schools' Community,

We are reaching out to all to request your continued support in ensuring the safety of our schools. Recent events have once again reminded us all of the reality of school violence and the importance of working together to prevent tragic incidents of violence in schools across our nation.

In St. Mary's County, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office (SMCSO) and St. Mary's County Public Schools (SMCPS) have engaged in a collaborative effort focusing on school safety and security for several years. This is accomplished through a commitment to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate our efforts to protect and ensure the safety of our students, staff, and schools. We have school resource officers for all secondary schools, adopt-a-school officers for all elementary schools, school administrators, and school security staff that focus on this mission every day. The pandemic, the exposure to reports of violence, and the inappropriate use of social media platforms continue to have a significant impact on many students and our school community.

During the past month, following the school shooting in Michigan on November 30, 2021, we experienced a significant increase in rumors circulating among our students regarding reports of possible school shootings in our schools. Please know we have a very specific protocol in place to address any report of a potential threat. The protocol is followed to ensure reports are screened immediately for credibility. All reports are addressed through formal threat assessments including home visits by the sheriff's office. An immediate intervention occurs with any student identified as involved in making a potential threat and they are not allowed to return to school pending the results of the threat assessment, formal investigation, and school disciplinary action.

None of the rumors reported this past month have been deemed credible. Many of our students have made good decisions and immediately reported what they heard to school or law enforcement authorities. They did not post, repeat, or reshare the information with others. However, others have chosen to post and reshare rumors over social media platforms or by other means. This results in increased anxiety for our students. It also negatively impacts the operation of our schools and depletes resources needed to assess reports. Most of the students posting or resharing the information have been unable to provide any direct source for the information and cannot provide any specifics about the rumor.

We are asking for your help. Please speak with your children about this developing concern and encourage them to always report anything they have heard or read on social media immediately to law enforcement or a school administrator. Please monitor your children's phones and social media accounts and be aware of how they are using their devices and accounts. Remind them to **report the information and not repeat it**. Information of

concern can be reported via text, email, web, or telephone 24 hours a day by accessing the SMCPS home page and clicking on the [see something say something icon](#).

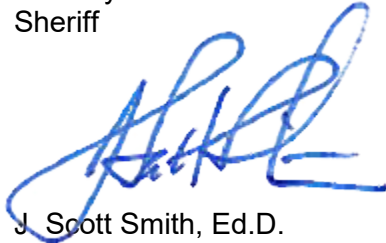
Please be assured we are committed to fully investigating and addressing all reports. This includes taking disciplinary action and enforcing the laws that address making threats of violence or any other disruptive behaviors - to include furthering rumors that have an impact on school operations. There are school disciplinary consequences for students who choose to post or reshare rumors of school violence.

The safety of students and staff remains our top priority. Together we remain vigilant and committed to the safety of your children, our students, staff, and schools.

Sincerely,



Timothy K. Cameron
Sheriff



J. Scott Smith, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools