



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ribbon-cutting Ceremony Celebrates the Grand Opening of Pennsylvania School Safety Institute

MECHANICSBURG, Pa., May 8, 2023 - The Pennsylvania School Safety Institute (PennSSI) celebrated the grand opening of its 5,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility this afternoon with a short program, ribbon-cutting ceremony and guided tours.

PennSSI was established to provide hands-on experiences and classroom training designed to address emerging security threats that may occur in school buildings, on district property or at other locations where students and staff may be present. District personnel, security staff and law enforcement officials learn de-escalation tactics using a multiroom simulator and 360-degree augmented reality.

During the celebration, remarks were provided by:

- Roberta M. Marcus, PennSSI's chair of the board of advisors
- David Schaap, PSBA's governing board president
- Chief Christopher Raubenstine, a member of PennSSI's board of advisors and Silver Spring Township police chief
- Dr. Mark Leidy, a member of PennSSI's board of advisors and superintendent of the Mechanicsburg Area School District
- Dr. Britta Barrickman, PSBA's chief impact officer

Each speaker provided commentary on the benefits of the institute, the projected impact and, ultimately, the lives that will be saved.

"Pennsylvania's public schools provide nearly 2 million school-age children with access to an education, extracurricular activities, nutritious food and more. Most importantly, public schools provide students with a safe environment that is conducive to continued learning and personal development. Unfortunately, in recent years, the safety and security of these public buildings have been tested and even targeted," stated Roberta M. Marcus. "Today, we are happy to unveil a new institute designed for key administrators, school safety officers and law enforcement to help them be more prepared to de-escalate these situations – the Pennsylvania School Safety Institute (PennSSI)."

Chief Raubenstine shared his first-hand experience, "I've recently experienced PennSSI's immersive scenarios, and I know that the lifelike and interactive nature of the simulations make them an excellent opportunity for our officers to train for what they might encounter as first responders. This technology allows us to practice a range of de-escalation tactics individually or together as a team and receive real-time feedback on how we interact with the simulations. All of these scenarios provide us with a clear advantage in preparing for potential safety and security concerns."

The motto at PennSSI is simple: Focused on prevention, guided by preparation. While PennSSI primarily serves those with connections to a school community, the institute is also available for use by nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Learn more about PennSSI at [PennSSI.org](https://pennssi.org).

About PennSSI: The Pennsylvania School Safety Institute (PennSSI) fosters safe and secure school communities through immersive scenarios and classroom trainings. PennSSI serves those who are tasked with keeping students and staff safe and works to equip individuals with the skills to address emerging security threats that may occur in school buildings, on district property or at other locations where students and staff may be present. Original funding for the creation of PennSSI LLC was provided by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association Trust.

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