



## Issue: School Safety

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**Bill:** H.B. 120 “Student and School Safety Assessment”

**Sponsor:** Rep. Ray Ward (R-Bountiful)

### **What it does:**

Besides appropriating more than \$100 million to improve school safety, increase access to mental health counseling, and provide training for school resource offices, this bill would establish a “threat assessment and student support” team in each Utah public school to monitor student behavior. The team would be composed individuals with expertise in 1) mental health; 2) instruction; 3) school administration; and 4) a law enforcement officer. The goal of these teams is to identify “red flags” in student behavior and address potential threats before a tragedy takes place. The teams would collect data, conduct interviews, and make recommendations to both mental health professionals and law enforcement.

### **Why it matters:**

In the aftermath of the February 2018 shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the Utah Legislature established the “Utah Safe Schools Commission” to make policy recommendations to improve school safety. One topic considered was warning signs of impending violence that students and staff missed or didn't take seriously. This bill’s inclusion of “threat assessment and student support” teams is designed to address that issue. However, civil libertarians worry that these teams, acting without proper oversight or training, will disproportionately target students with mental health issues or students of color—increasing the damage caused by the existing school-to-prison-pipeline.

### **Key Question:**

Does any improvement in school safety generated by this bill outweigh the potential it has to infringe on student civil liberties and exacerbate the school-to-prison-pipeline in Utah schools?

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**Instructions:** As a group, spend the next five minutes crafting a pitch to lobby your expert to pass this bill.