

FEDERAL

Trump Admin. Axes Newly Created School Safety Board

The panel was enshrined in legislation, leaving its fate unclear



By [Evie Blad](#) — January 23, 2025 ⌚ 4 min read



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died in school shootings, advocates for civil rights and disability rights, superintendents, and leaders of organizations that represent school and district administrators.

Three board members confirmed they'd received notice that the Department of Homeland Security planned to terminate current members of the board under an inauguration day directive that applies to all external advisory committees that work with the agency. Other DHS external advisory committees deal with issues like cybersecurity and infrastructure safety.

A memo the members received, from acting Homeland Security Secretary Benamine Huffman, said the broad decision was part of the agency's commitment to "eliminating misuse of resources and ensuring that DHS activities prioritize our national security."

"Future committee activities will be focused solely on advancing our critical mission to protect the homeland and support DHS's strategic priorities," reads the memo. "To outgoing advisory board members, you are welcome to reapply, thank you for your service."

Tony Montalto, whose daughter Gina died along with 16 other students and teachers in the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., and was appointed to the board when it was organized in June, said he was disappointed when he received a copy of the general DHS memo related to all external committee memberships this week.

"What is more critical infrastructure than our schools?" said Montalto, who is now the president of Stand With Parkland, a group of victims' families who advocate for school safety strategies.

Agency provides little clarity on board's future

The Homeland Security Department's press office did not directly respond to Education Week's query asking it to confirm that the memo applied to the school safety board, and to

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mission, the President's agenda or Constitutional rights of Americans," that statement said.

The Federal School Safety Clearinghouse, an interagency effort housed in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, was [created by President Donald Trump's first administration](#) after the Parkland shooting to share resources and best practices related to school safety. Parkland victims' families, who rushed to advocacy work after the tragedy, pushed for its creation after they grew concerned that research on school safety was confusing for educators and the public to navigate.

The clearinghouse was codified into law as part of the [2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#), which also mandated the creation of the external advisory board.

"President Trump worked with the families of the victims in the first administration," said Montalto, who said he hopes to rejoin the board if it is reassembled. "We are very hopeful that we continue that working relationship. To us, this is a nonpartisan issue. We've been able to work with great champions on both sides of the aisle."

Board member Liz King, the senior program director for education equity at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, said she had not received notice of the board's disbandment. The board had held just one meeting and was in the process of setting priorities and forming committees, she said.

Diverse voices inform school safety plans

It can be difficult to reach consensus on school safety issues, which is why it's important to have a diverse array of viewpoints, King said.

"I think the Trump administration has been abundantly clear that they do not want to hear from the public," King said. "This was not a monolithic group with a singular view of any question. I had fully expected significant disagreement about the right path to that goal."

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involvement in routine school discipline or profiling of students with disabilities, King said.

“Every child deserves the chance to be safe in school every day,” King said. When the board was formed, “there was a recognition that the questions of school safety and respect for every student required a lot of minds and experiences at the table.”

Board members included:

- Leaders of organizations that represent elementary and secondary school principals, school psychologists, superintendents, teachers’ unions, school resource officers, and private schools;
- Current superintendents from Dekalb County, Ga.; Red Lake, Minn.; and Seattle;
- Researchers who study violence prevention and healthy school climates;
- Representatives from The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the ACLU, and the National Disability Rights Network; and
- Various state and national school safety organizations.



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