



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# School safety forum tomorrow

*Panel at EPCC builds on the March 21st Keeping Our Schools Safe event*

**El Paso** - The second Students' Forum: *Keeping our Schools Safe*, a collaboration between state Sen. José Rodríguez, the Senate District 29 Youth Advisory Committee, and UTEP and EPCC student governments will take place at the El Paso Community College Administrative Services Center (Auditorium, Bldg. A, 9050 Viscount) from 6-8 p.m., Thursday, April 19, 2018.

This is the second event focused on facilitating a community conversation around school safety and gun violence. On March 21st, students, teachers, parents, and others heard student perspectives on school safety, which were followed by discussions in smaller groups to address the issues raised and possible solutions.

At this Thursday's forum, student participants from the first event will present their concerns and questions to community leaders in an effort to continue a local dialogue and take action around gun-related violence to keep our schools safe. Panelists include:

- Victor Araiza, Chief of EPISD Police Dept., El Paso ISD
- Manuel Chavira, Safe & Secure Schools Manager, El Paso ISD
- Marivel Macias, Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services, Socorro ISD
- Ross Moore, President, El Paso Federation of Teachers
- Alan H. Tyroch, MD, Chief of Surgery & Trauma Medical Director, University Medical Center of El Paso
- Sandra Gonzalez, RN, Trauma Department Director, University Medical Center of El Paso
- Chrystal L. Davis, LPC, MBA, Chief Clinical Officer, Emergence Health Network

"This is a multi-faceted problem that is going to require multi-faceted solution," said EPCC SGA President Andrea Porras, who will be one of two student moderators for the panel. Of the March 21st event, she said, "I learned that there are a lot of different opinions and solutions that people have and that this problem cannot have a one size fit solved solution. I hope that we can keep the conversation alive in order for us to affect change in policy."

Emilio Posada, Burges High School Senior and the other panel moderator, said of Thursday's event: "I hope for the audience to engage with the panel as much as possible and to take away from this discussion the solutions they believe in order to continue this conversation with efforts to seek an end to the problem."

The March 21st forum discussion included questions, concerns, and ideas about resources for teachers to help students; policy proposals such as raising the age for purchase, risk-based protective orders, universal background checks, and mandatory training; supporting student expression while maintaining school district functions; developing safety policies, including whether to arm teachers; monitoring social media; installing metal detectors or requiring clear backpacks; how law enforcement coordinates with school district officers to prepare for a disastrous event; dealing with student behaviors; dealing with victims of a shooting, including acute trauma care and PTSD/counseling; and spotting warning behaviors early, while also not stigmatizing mental illness.

"As a legislator, I have focused on policies that can directly lead to prevention of some of these horrible events, such as risk-based protective orders, and will continue to do so in the Texas Legislature," Rodríguez said. "It was refreshing, inspiring, and instructive to hear from students on the broad range of questions, concerns, and ideas they had, and I look forward to continuing this dialogue with the community."

The public, especially parents and teachers, is encouraged to attend the event, which takes place the day before a nationwide day of action, Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup> (the anniversary of the Columbine school shooting), during which students will gather for 17 minutes of silence in honor of the 17 people killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida earlier this year.

**What:** Part Two of *Students' Forum: Keeping our Schools Safe*

**When:** 6 p.m., Thursday, April 19, 2018

**Where:** Auditorium, Bldg. A, EPCC Administrative Services Center, 9050 Viscount Blvd.

**For more information:** Samantha Romero, 915-351-3500

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*José Rodríguez represents Texas Senate District 29, which includes the counties of El Paso, Hudspeth, Culberson, Jeff Davis, and Presidio. He represents both urban and rural constituencies, and more than 350 miles of the Texas-Mexico border. Senator Rodríguez currently serves as the Chairman of the Senate Democratic Caucus, and a member of the Senate Committees on Natural Resources and Economic Development; Transportation; Veteran Affairs and Border Security; and Agriculture, Water, and Rural Affairs.*