



***Lunenburg County Public Schools
1009 Main Street
Kenbridge, VA 23944***



***Lunenburg County Sheriff's Department
160 Courthouse Square
Lunenburg, VA 23952***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE--

Date: September 13, 2022

Subject: Joint Statement by Lunenburg County Sheriff Arthur Townsend, Jr. and Lunenburg County Public Schools Superintendent Charles M. Berkley, Jr.

The criminal investigation continues into the threat made against Lunenburg County Public Schools this past Sunday, September 11, 2022 and the Sheriff's Office and the School Administration are working together to provide for the safety of students and staff.

Sheriff Arthur Townsend, Jr. said that he is pleased with the progress being made by his investigators and the Virginia State Police High-Tech Crimes Division. "Obviously, situations involving online activities take time to pursue the different avenues of identifying the source of the message," said Townsend. "We are making progress. As most people know, identification can be tricky because of fraudulent options used by perpetrators, such as spoofing, etc., that lead to an innocent individual being blamed. We are systematically eliminating false leads and pursuing more productive leads. We are still asking the public to share information that may prove useful."

Townsend said he is also aware of false rumors running throughout the community and wants to reassure the public that the more outlandish ones are definitely without merit.

School Superintendent Charles M. Berkley, Jr. and Townsend jointly related the following:

We want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the understanding and patience of parents, residents, students, and our schools' faculty and staff. In today's environment, decisive action is necessary to ensure the safety of our schools and communities at all times. Both of our departments are fully committed to keeping our children, teachers, and staff safe from harm at school facilities across the county.

As soon as the threat was received on the evening of Sunday, September 11, 2022, through the Sheriff's Office Facebook page, the Sheriff's Office was in immediate contact with Superintendent Berkley to identify what steps needed to be taken in advance of school opening Monday morning. The threat itself was vague in its target, but specific enough to be taken seriously. The Virginia State Police High-Tech Crimes Division is assisting with the ongoing investigation by the Sheriff's Office into the source of the threat. Because this is an active investigation, we are not able to comment any further about the details of the threat itself.

Providing a safe learning environment for our students, faculty, and staff is an everyday priority for us. School districts across our nation are dealing with threats of violence on a constant basis. Even though the great majority of them turn out to be hoaxes, there remains no room for complacency on our part. That is why parents, students, faculty, and staff can expect to see an increased law enforcement presence at Lunenburg County schools again Wednesday, September 14. Our Sheriff's Deputies will be onsite and within the area as a means of reassurance and for public safety.

The school system has made the decision to excuse absences for today, Tuesday, September 13, 2022. For Wednesday, September 14 through Friday, September 16, parents will need to write a note stating that their child is absent due to concerns regarding the threat to schools and those absences will be excused as well.

We also encourage anyone with information about this threat or any threat, to call 911 to reach the sheriff's office or CrimeStoppers at 434-696-3100.