



John F. Kennedy High School
Parent Teacher Student
Association

Jan. 27, 2025

Kennedy Community, we want to start out by acknowledging that last week was incredibly taxing and challenging for our community. Our school is a place where we want and expect our students and staff to learn, thrive and build community. It is not a place that we want people to be afraid to step foot into, due to concerns about physical violence, knives or guns, substance use and distribution or hate.

Unfortunately, security incidents have been our reality as a school community for too long. The students who witnessed the self-harm incident in their classroom and stepped up to save their peer did an incredibly brave and heroic thing. But we want Kennedy to be a place where students receive the kind of mental and emotional health support services that they need so that they aren't turning to such tragic, desperate measures..

The sighting and reporting of a student with a gun on school grounds, which led to a lockdown of the school for hours, was a serious wake-up call. As the details and facts of the incident continue to settle and come to light, we know that we cannot take this moment lightly. Thankfully, no one was hurt, but unless we act, there's no guarantee that will be the case in the future.

That is why we as a PTSA are calling for school leadership and MCPS to take action to Keep Kennedy SAFE. For too long, these kinds of incidents have been normalized or looked over. That's not ok. John F. Kennedy High School students and staff deserve better.

In an effort to shine a light on a more optimistic future for our school community, we are asking for:

- The additional security assistants that were included in the June 2024 audit done by the MCPS Office of Systemwide Safety and Emergency Management.
- An outside school safety expert who can be on the ground for the next few months to review and update all safety protocols and best practices to ensure maximum fidelity and thorough training.

- The development of a short-term plan to dramatically improve the safety of our school for the remainder of this school year and a long-term plan that prioritizes community input and collaboration.
- A community meeting led by the JFKHS PTSA with speakers from MCPS, the BoE, the County Council and other partners to get a full debrief on last week's events and discuss what is needed to improve schools safety.

We hope that MCPS and our local government officials take seriously our call for change at Kennedy. We love our school and we love our students and staff and we believe they deserve to be able to learn in an environment that looks, feels and IS truly safe.

Sincerely,

Ricky Ribeiro, PTSA President

Ijeoma Enendu, PTSA Vice President

Bonnie Bender, PTSA Treasurer

Jewell Martin, PTSA Secretary