The Arizona Legislature is considering a bill that would create a hotline where students can anonymously report threats against their school, classmates or themselves. The hotline would let students from any school in the state report potential threats. While individual schools may have similar programs, a single statewide channel can reduce confusion as to where and how reports can be made. According to the bill, the information reported will then be “promptly forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and school officials.”

The proposed program in Arizona is similar to that of other states, including Colorado, Utah, Oregon and others. Some programs utilize hotlines, mobile applications and websites.

The Arizona bill was introduced shortly before the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School earlier this year, where it was discovered that the perpetrator had been reported to the authorities, but that this information was not followed up on. These programs may make it easier to aggregate student concerns that can then be provided to the proper authorities.

In Colorado, arrests have been made based on tips submitted to their Safe2Tell program, which is one of the country’s oldest having been created as a response to the 1999 Columbine High School massacre.

However, these programs would allow for more than tips about mass shooting threats. Students can also report concerns over classmates who may be suicidal, engaged in bullying or domestic violence. In Colorado, most of the reports are in regard to suicide, whereas mass shooting concerns were seventh. This is especially important as teen suicide rates continue to climb having increased by nearly a third over the last 10 years.

Congress is also considering nationwide implementation of a similar program. The bipartisan bill is entitled the Student, Teachers and Officers Preventing, or STOP, School Violence Act of 2018. It passed the House this March.

By: Monday, April 30, 2018 at 01:40 PM

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