



For immediate release

September 21, 2021

### **Simultaneous Bomb Threats and Ransom Demand Prompt Evacuations on Four Campuses**

Shortly after noon Tuesday, Fayette County Public Schools officials received an anonymous message through the district's STOP Tip line that bombs had been placed on four high school campuses. The message demanded a \$500,000 ransom payment to a Bitcoin account.

The unusual nature of the threat, the specific information it contained, and condensed timeline for response prompted officials to evacuate all four campuses immediately. Schools impacted were Frederick Douglass, Henry Clay, Lafayette, and Paul Laurence Dunbar high schools. All high school afterschool activities were also cancelled.

"There is no room for error when it comes to the health and safety of our students and staff," said Fayette County Public Schools Superintendent Demetrus Liggins. "Our schools have emergency plans in place for situations like this and their response was phenomenal."

Officers with the Fayette County Public Schools Police Department and Lexington Police Department assisted with the evacuation, which involved roughly 10,000 students and employees across all four campuses. Since SCAPA at Bluegrass is located on the Lafayette High School campus, students and staff from that building were also instructed to move to an alternate location.

"The credit is really to our school leaders," said Fayette County Public Schools Police Chief Martin Schafer. "Everything went smoothly, and we quickly got students and staff to safety."

While some officers coordinated efforts at schools, the Lexington Police Intelligence Unit and Federal Bureau of Investigations launched their investigation into the source of the threat.

That work is continuing, Schafer said, "but we can say the threat was received from outside the Fayette County Public Schools network."

Once students and staff were moved to safety, officers began inspecting the buildings for any potential threat. Experts from multiple agencies – including the Hazardous Devices Unit, ATF, and Sheriff's Office – responded and explosives-detecting dogs were used.

#### **AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Board of Education: Tyler Murphy, Chair • Amy Green, Vice Chair • Tom Jones • Christy Morris • Stephanie Spires

Superintendent Demetrus Liggins, PhD

450 Park Place, Lexington, Kentucky 40511 • Phone: 859.381.4100 • [www.fcps.net](http://www.fcps.net)

As of 10 p.m., Frederick Douglass, Henry Clay, Lafayette, and Paul Laurence Dunbar high schools have all been cleared by law enforcement experts and are safe for occupancy. And although there were no threats made against SCAPA at Bluegrass, it is also currently being searched, out of an abundance of caution.

Normal school operations will resume tomorrow.

“We’d like to thank our entire community – students, families, employees, and local and federal law enforcement officials for their incredible response and action,” Liggins said. “Since moving to Lexington this summer, I have found reason every day to be impressed with the way people in Fayette County step up to support our students, staff and schools. Today affirmed once more that this is a very special place.”

-END-