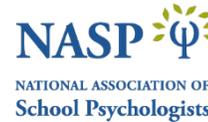


STATEMENT FROM NATIONAL EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PACKAGE IN SENATE



A Union of Professionals



June 8, 2022 – The 17 organizations above representing the full breadth of the national K-12 education community, including school superintendents, administrators, educators, school mental health providers, school staff and parents, call on Congress to swiftly pass legislation that will address the senseless epidemic of gun violence in this country.

Schools and educators alone cannot bear the full burden of addressing the public health crisis of gun violence. The answer to stopping gun violence in our schools is not to arm our educators or to focus solely on better addressing the mental health crisis. As a nation, we must take a hard look at the various societal factors that are contributing to our high rates of gun violence and suicide and commit to meaningful action.

Specifically, we call on Congress to pass gun-violence prevention legislation that would:

- Prevent access to dangerous weapons by those deemed at risk of hurting themselves or others
- Expand background checks for all gun purchasers
- Increase investments for rigorous gun-violence prevention research

Undoubtedly, increasing access to comprehensive mental and behavioral health services, both in communities and in schools, is of paramount importance. In the school setting, access to comprehensive mental and behavioral health services (and professionals like school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers) is a key component of a comprehensive approach to school safety.

To this end, we call on Congress to provide significant and targeted funding to existing funding streams rather than create new programs. Collectively, the Mental Health Service Professionals Demonstration Grant Program, the School Based Mental Health Services Grant, and the STOP School Violence Act represent three existing funding streams that support increased access to comprehensive school mental health services and professionals, and support of evidence-based violence prevention strategies.

We also urge Congress to continue its bipartisan, bicameral work to address the youth mental health crisis by building the pipeline of mental health personnel in schools, expanding access to Medicaid-reimbursable mental and behavioral health services in schools, and expanding collaboration and coordination between the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services in their work with schools and school-based providers.

Our students deserve to go to school and thrive in communities where they are safe. To achieve this goal, we need laws that address the gun-violence epidemic and ensure our children and educators can learn and work without constant fear for their lives.