

Dear Senator:

As the Senate debates how to make the nation safer for its children, we the undersigned national, state and local organizations urge you to protect children by expanding federal funding to increase positive school safety measures, by requiring universal background checks for all gun purchases, and by prohibiting the sale of ammunition magazines holding more than ten rounds of ammunition.

In 2010 more young children under age five were killed by guns than the number of law enforcement officers who died from guns in the line of duty. That year a child or teen was injured by a gun every 30 minutes and a child died from gun violence every three hours and 15 minutes. Universal background checks, a ban on high capacity magazines and increased funding for positive school safety measures will help protect children from the gun violence that threatens their lives every day.

It is essential that schools remain a safe haven for learning. Although less than two percent of child gun homicides occur in schools, children cannot learn if they do not feel safe. Therefore we urge you to support steps to ensure schools remain safe through additional federal funding to support evidence-based practices including placing more mental health professionals and counselors in schools; providing wrap-around services for vulnerable children; implementing school-wide positive behavioral supports; teaching children how to resolve conflict peacefully; creating a positive school climate based on good communication between children, parents and educators; and by securing schools by locking doors from the outside as school begins, not by using armed security guards or police officers. There is no evidence that armed security guards or police officers will keep children safer in schools.

Keeping guns away from underage or dangerous persons is essential to keeping children safe. Yet, as many as one out of five gun sales may be occurring without a background check. Today in most states anyone can buy a gun without a background check if they purchase it from private sellers. A universal background check requirement for all purchasers is sound policy. More than two million gun purchases have been denied since the existing system was launched in 1994. Our organizations urge you to stand with the close to 90 percent of Americans and the 85 percent of gun owners who support universal background checks and vote to close this deadly loophole.

We urge you to restore the ban on large capacity magazines with more than 10 rounds of ammunition which have increased the deadliness of many recent mass shootings. Murderers with large capacity magazines were able to kill more people at a faster rate in massacres at Virginia Tech (32 dead), Fort Hood (13 dead), Tucson (six dead), Aurora (12 dead), and Newtown (26 dead). Restoring the ban on high capacity magazines is an essential step to protect children.

The Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre woke up the nation to epidemic gun violence that has taken the lives of an estimated 166,500 children and teens since 1963, the equivalent of over 8,300 classrooms of 20 children.

We urge you to vote for common sense positive school safety measures, universal background checks and limits on high capacity magazines to ensure child and community safety.

Sincerely yours,