

Dear Secretary DeVos,

Improving school safety and reducing violence is a complex issue for which there is not one single solution. Genuine school safety efforts must balance both physical and psychological safety. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors. They must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach that facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration and builds on a multi-tiered system of supports.

As the Federal Commission on School Safety considers how to improve school safety and reduce school violence, we strongly caution against seemingly quick and potentially harmful solutions that intend to harden our schools, such as arming school personnel. While we recognize local collaborative decision making and authority in securing and protecting schools, we urge you to promote federal policy that supports the implementation of the evidence-based policies and practices articulated in the Framework that will equip America's schools to educate and safeguard our children over the long term. Furthermore, we ask you to consult with the author organizations as you consider school safety related policy and funding.

In 2013, national education groups representing principals, school-employed mental health professionals, and school resource officers developed [A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#) to provide a common set of recommendations for policies and practices that create and sustain safe, supportive learning environments. The goal was, and is, to reinforce the interdisciplinary, collaborative, and cohesive approach required to improve school climate, implement multi-tiered systems of support, advance positive discipline practices, and increase access to the mental and behavioral health services necessary to meet the needs of all children and youth. Endorsed by over 100 organizations and experts, the Framework has successfully influenced important policy including the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, the Every Student Succeeds Act, and various state and local school safety efforts. Despite the positive steps forward, there is still much work to be done to ensure every school has a safe and supportive learning environment. As such, we have developed a set of three supplemental resources, including [Policy Recommendations for Implementing the Framework](#), and [Considerations and Action Steps](#) to provide additional guidance on effective school safety policy and practice.

Our organizations have specific expertise in evidence-based school safety practice and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss possible policy solutions needed to ensure that every child attends a safe and supportive school. Please feel free to reach out with questions or to discuss how we can collectively advance policy and practice as articulated in the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools and its supplemental materials.

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