



NASSP Statement on Final Report of Federal Commission on School Safety

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Reston, VA — NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti issued the following statement on the final report of the Federal Commission on School Safety:

It is puzzling that the Federal Commission on School Safety would spend seven months and untold tax dollars on rediscovering well-known school safety strategies, in part a subset of the more comprehensive Framework for Safe and Successful Schools. In any case, we welcome the Commission's voice to our common call for greater attention to the mental health both of our students and of those who might do them harm.

Yet the Commission compromises its own credibility by staying mute on the issue of firearm access and other prevention efforts that reduce the need to turn schools into fortresses. Guns in the wrong hands is a common element in school shootings. The Commission's failure to address that element—with even the most sensible and noncontroversial recommendations—is nothing short of willful ignorance. Equally obtuse is the Commission's guidance for arming school personnel—remarkably the only federal guidance this administration does not perceive as intrusive and burdensome, on a notion rejected by a consensus of education organizations and the educators, parents, and students they represent.

Rescinding Discipline Guidance

There is no disputing that racial disparities persist in suspensions and expulsions, and the evidence shows that schools that address the true causes of the gaps see a more positive culture and fewer violent incidents. In schools that adopt restorative practices in place of exclusionary practices, minority students see more time in school, resulting in higher achievement and fewer referrals to juvenile justice systems. The guidance encouraged many schools to find ways to help students succeed rather than react to behaviors that accelerate their failures, and therefore direct students on a path to prosperity rather than prison. There should be no

argument that these effects are good things. But in strikingly convoluted and sadly predictable fashion, the Commission asserts without foundation that this nonbinding guidance makes school less safe. The conclusion is offensive, it's infuriating, it's nonsensical, and it will assuredly lead to the result the administration wanted all along.

Secretary DeVos in particular has demonstrated time and again her dexterity in undoing efforts to enforce the rights of vulnerable student populations. Yet this discipline-disparity crisis is not one she can just kick to the states or private school-voucher away. The secretary must now act with purpose to fulfill the Department's expressed mission of "prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education." Otherwise, she cements her status as a champion among the defenders of the status quo she so often derides. Without the force of law, the guidance could quietly persist to exercise persuasive influence and provide principals cover as they do the right thing often against strong political headwinds. By proposing to rescind the guidance, this administration only intensifies the headwind, sending a clear and dismissive message to our most vulnerable students.

About NASSP

The [National Association of Secondary School Principals \(NASSP\)](#) is the leading organization of and voice for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States. The association connects and engages school leaders through advocacy, research, education, and student programs. NASSP advocates on behalf of all school leaders to ensure the success of each student and strengthens school leadership practices through the design and delivery of high-quality professional learning experiences. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the [National Honor Society](#), [National Junior Honor Society](#), [National Elementary Honor Society](#), and [National Student Council](#).