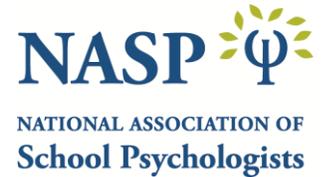


Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 23, 2018

Contact: Katherine Cowan, Director, Communications
301-347-1665 • kcowan@naspweb.org



NASP Opposes Federal Funds to Support Arming Teachers

Bethesda, MD—The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) is deeply concerned by a reported proposal by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos to allow schools to use federal Title IV-Part A funds to purchase firearms. We join with our [Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#) coauthor organizations in strongly opposing such inappropriate use of these funds because putting more guns in schools will not improve school safety.

If enacted, this proposal would be an unprecedented break from the federal government's role in funding (or not) access to firearms in schools. Grant programs administered by the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security explicitly prohibit the use of federal funds for the purchase or training of firearms in regards to school safety or preparedness. Americans should expect the Department of Education to maintain the same level of responsible use of federal funds.

Uphold the Purpose of Title IV-Part A

[Title IV-Part A](#) funds are designated to provide direct, ongoing educational services like mental health supports and violence prevention programs that promote student learning and well-being. NASP finds it irresponsible for the Department to consider diverting funds from a large much-needed grant program in order to promote a dangerous policy that will not improve school safety or student learning. Schools need significant federal support like that provided in Title IV-Part A, to fund mental and physical health programs, physical education, music and arts education, STEM, AP/IB courses, computer science and the effective use of technology. Congress did not intend these funds to be used for the one time purchase of equipment, including firearms.

Although Congress did intend for Title IV-A funds to be flexible to meet district needs, there are parameters to this flexibility that do not include the purchase of weapons. The interagency Federal Commission for School Safety, chaired by Secretary DeVos, has stated that it will not address the issue of access to weapons as part of its work. The Department of Education's reported proposal is in direct conflict with this commitment. Importantly, there is strong public opposition to increasing the availability of weapons on school campuses and no evidence that this practice would make schools safer.

Oppose Putting More Guns in Schools

Like most every other education organization, NASP strongly opposes any effort to place guns in schools, beyond those used by school resource offices and other commissioned law enforcement officers. Arming teachers would place an unrealistic, unreasonable burden on America's educators, has the potential to cause more harm from unintentional or inaccurate discharge of firearms, and can undermine the sense of safe, supportive learning environments. Along with other law enforcement

NASP Opposes Use of Federal Funds to Support Arming Teachers

For Immediate Release from the National Association of School Psychologists | www.nasponline.org | 301-657-0270

agencies, the National Association of School Resource Officers has clearly articulated [the hazards](#) associated with individuals possessing firearms who lack extensive law enforcement training and the sworn authority to enforce public safety. Among these risks are that an individual with a gun but not in uniform could be mistaken for a shooter, firearm skills degrade quickly and require constant practice under high stress conditions, being able to shoot a gun does not mean an individual is psychologically equipped to shoot another person, and discharging a firearm in a crowded school setting is very risky.

Enact Effective, Comprehensive School Safety Policies

Equally important, the time and costs associated with training and arming school staff diverts critical human and financial resources away from strategies known to help decrease violent behaviors, such as improved access to mental health services, effective threat assessment practices, properly trained school crisis response teams, and creating welcoming, inclusive school communities for all students.

[A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](#) outlines the core components of school safety. This includes improving access to school-employed mental health professionals like school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers, who serve on the frontlines of meeting students' mental health needs and provide threat assessments for students at risk of harming themselves or others. Additionally, we need improved coordination and collaboration between school staff, community mental health providers, law enforcement, and other first responders to close gaps in response to at-risk students and ensure they receive the interventions and supports they need.

NASP believes that more effective gun laws are critical to reducing gun violence. We need laws and policies that keep guns out of the hands of those who are a threat to themselves or others and limit access to weapons intended to cause mass destruction in a short amount of time. We urge Congress to act immediately to pass legislation to reduce inappropriate access to weapons and to ensure that federal dollars are not used for the purchase of weapons to arm teachers and other educators.

We also call on Secretary DeVos to maintain the intended purpose of Title IV-Part A and to focus federal school safety efforts on approaches that genuinely safeguard the well-being of our children and the school staff who work to educate, empower, and protect them every day. Putting more guns in schools is not one of those approaches.

Resources Related to School Crisis and Violence Prevention

[Framework for Safe and Successful Schools](http://www.nasponline.org/schoolsafetyframework) (www.nasponline.org/schoolsafetyframework)

[PREPaRE Training Curriculum](http://www.nasponline.org/prepare) (www.nasponline.org/prepare)

[NASP Resolution on Efforts to Prevent Gun Violence](http://www.nasponline.org/nasp-resolutionprevent-gun-violence) (www.nasponline.org/nasp-resolutionprevent-gun-violence)

For additional information, visit www.nasponline.org or contact NASP Director of Communications, Kathy Cowan at kcowan@naspweb.org or NASP Director of Policy and Advocacy, Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach at kvaillancourt@naspweb.org.

###

NASP Opposes Use of Federal Funds to Support Arming Teachers