



October 26, 2022

The Honorable Senator Mark Warner
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Senator Tim Kaine
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Representative Don Beyer Jr.
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Warner, Senator Kaine, and Representative Beyer Jr.,

The Alexandria Parent Teacher Association Council (PTAC) recognizes that many challenges loom large over the start of the new 2022-2023 school year in the City of Alexandria, including increasing rates of school violence. School violence and disciplinary problems escalated as students returned to the classroom last year in Alexandria, and reached a deafening crescendo at the close of the 2021-2022 school year with the tragic death of Alexandria City High School student Luis Mejia Hernandez. Students and staff reported in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Equity Climate Survey that they do not feel safe at school, a fundamental prerequisite to learning and teaching.

Our priority as a nation must be our children. PTAC joins with the National PTA in calling upon our elected officials who represent City of Alexandria to support and advance legislation that:

- Bans assault weapons and raises the minimum age to purchase handguns: Assault Weapons Ban (S. [736](#), H.R. [1808](#)) Age 21 Act (S. [4278](#)) Raise the Age Act (H.R. [3015](#))
- Invests in evidence-based community violence intervention strategies: Break the Cycle of Violence Act (S. [2275](#), H.R. [4118](#))
- Requires a waiting period and comprehensive background check for all individuals prior to purchasing a firearm: Bipartisan Background Checks Act (S. [529](#), H.R. [8](#))

- Supports research on gun violence prevention and encourages reporting on school crime and safety: Gun Violence Prevention Research Act (S. [281](#), H.R. [825](#))
- Requires the Secretary of Education to publish an annual report on school crime and safety, including statistics on school shootings: School Shooting Safety and Preparedness Act (H.R. [5428](#))
- Encourages gun safety education and the safe storage of firearms: Safe Gun Storage Act of 2021 (S. [1825](#), H.R. [3509](#))

PTAC also recognizes the need for youth mental health legislation that encourages schools to adopt practices that establish safe, supportive and inclusive learning environments for all students. As such, we encourage you to support and advance legislation that:

- Establishes deferral standards to protect every student from bullying and harassment in K-12 schools regardless of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identify, disability and religion: Safe Schools Improvement Act (S. 2410, H.R. 4402)
- Increases the number of mental health professionals at low income schools by supporting partnerships between institutions of higher education and local education agencies to support teaching, training and employment of school counselors, social workers and psychologists: Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools Act (S. 181, H.R. 3572)
- Increases access to school-based, mental health services providers at high-need public elementary and secondary schools: Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act (S. 3356, H.R. 6214)

We appreciate the progress made with the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#) and other initiatives to keep our children and school staff safe, but as this week's school shooting in St. Louis reminds us, more needs to be done. PTAC urges you to prioritize these bills and any legislation that enacts common sense gun laws and youth mental health legislation. School must be a safe and welcoming place for every child and educator and the long-term success of our nation depends on legislation and policies that further those goals.

Thank you,

Alexandria PTA Council Executive Board 2022-2023

<https://www.alexvaptac.org/>

President@alexvaptac.org