

May 18, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

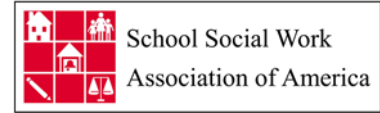
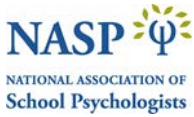
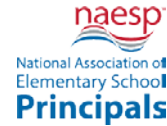
Re: Federal Commission on School Safety

Dear Secretary DeVos:

The undersigned 8 national organizations —representing millions of parents; principals; school counselors; school employed mental health professionals; superintendents; and state chiefs — are the professionals and advocates responsible for ensuring the safety of our nation’s schools, students and staff on a day-to-day basis. Collectively, we have significant expertise and understanding about best practices in creating safe schools and have worked to advance evidence-based policy and practice in states and districts across the country.

Our organizations share the Commission’s commitment to enhancing school safety and student well-being and appreciate the Secretary’s recent invitation to attend a school safety meeting on May 17 in Washington, D.C. We were also encouraged by the U.S. Department of Education’s [press release](#) announcing the formation of the Commission on School Safety and mention of future meetings with “students, parents, teachers, school safety personnel, administrators, law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, school counselors, security professionals and other related stakeholders.” Regrettably, there have been no further public announcements or specific details provided regarding meaningful opportunities for concerned citizens, practitioners and experts in the field to engage with the Commission. Our organizations ask that the Commission works urgently to meaningfully engage stakeholders in the field.

We know the critical importance of stakeholder engagement as part of an effective public dialogue. Our members have been intimately involved in the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and we have learned through our experiences with ESSA and other education initiatives that engaging all stakeholders is critical throughout the entire process. We urge you, as Chair, to publicly share specific details on the Commission’s plans for stakeholder engagement across the country. With the school year winding down, we want to make sure that all stakeholders have the time and opportunity to participate in any listening sessions, meetings or other engagements with the Commission. We appreciate the opportunity



for stakeholders to submit written comments to the Commission and would like additional details on how these comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the Commission’s broader efforts.

We support the administration taking a leadership role in helping advance this work and urge you to engage us and our members in the field in a substantive and ongoing way as the Commission works to study, evaluate and make recommendations on how to continue to improve school safety. We strongly believe that the Commission, and ultimately America’s children, would greatly benefit from a collaborative effort where we can share our working knowledge about how improving access to school mental health services; facilitating coordination between schools, law enforcement and community agencies; balancing physical and psychological safety; and promoting a positive school climate all contribute to safe schools.

All of us share the responsibility to create and ensure safe, supportive and welcoming learning environments. We look forward to partnering with the Commission, the administration, Congress, and state and local policy makers to engage the field and shape policies based on best practices in school safety and climate, student mental health, instructional leadership, teaching and learning. We have and will continue to provide resources and support to our members to ensure every student can learn and grow in a safe environment.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding the Commission’s next steps and how our organizations can support stakeholder engagement efforts in the field.

Sincerely,

AASA: The School Superintendents Association  
 American School Counselor Association  
 Council of Chief State School Officers  
 National Association of Elementary School Principals  
 National Association of School Psychologists  
 National Association of Secondary School Principals  
 National PTA  
 School Social Work Association of America