

September 13, 2018

Dear FY2019 Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education Appropriations Conferees,

National PTA would like to thank you for your work on the FY2019 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (LHHS) Appropriations bills. As the nation's oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association, we are pleased with the legislation's increased investment in programs to support public education, including the \$10 million in funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs). However, we are deeply concerned that the bill does not include language to clarify and ensure that Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) program funds under Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) cannot be used to purchase guns or provide firearm training for educators. The Title IV-A is intended to help schools provide students with important resources and ongoing direct services—such as comprehensive mental health programs—as well as drug, violence and bullying prevention programs. Using this program for one-time purchases to put guns in schools would run counter to its intended purpose of promoting a safe and healthy school climate. We recognize there is limited time to prohibit use of Title IV-A funds for firearms in the FY2019 LHHS appropriations bill, however National PTA would like to remain on record in staunch opposition to the use of these funds in this way.

Our association stands by the principle that the most effective day-to-day school climate is a gun-free campus – which includes not arming teachers and administrators. The call for gun-free campuses has not only been echoed by millions of concerned parents and educators around the country, but by current law as well. In ESEA section 4102(5)(B), Congress defines the “Drug and Violence Prevention” program in Title IV-A as a program that seeks to establish “the creation and maintenance of a school environment that is free of weapons.”<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the bipartisan Stop School Violence Prevention and Mental Health Training Program which was included in the enacted FY2018 omnibus appropriations bill ensures “no amounts provided as a grant under this part may be used for provision to any person of a firearm or training in the use of a firearm.”<sup>2</sup> Congress has made clear through federal law that federal funds should not be used for the purchase of firearms.

Our association uses evidence-based research when making critical policy decisions, and there has been no conclusive research or evidence to indicate that arming teachers will make schools safer. On the contrary, research does indicate that the over-hardening of schools diminishes school safety and has a negative impact on school climate.

National PTA strongly opposes to the use of Title IV-A funding to arm teachers, and we urge you to

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<sup>1</sup> Elementary and Secondary Education Act, section 4102(5)(B)

<sup>2</sup> H.R. 1625 – Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018

work with your colleagues in Congress to provide a permanent legislative fix to prohibit the use of Title IV-A funds (and for that matter any federal grant funds) to purchase firearms. We want to work with you to create certainty that federal funds cannot be used for firearms and encourage you to look to language in the recently-passed Stop School Violence Prevention and Mental Health Training Program as your model to address this issue. Teachers and administrators are in schools to educate our children and should not be acting as armed security in classrooms.

We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss ways to enact a legislative solution. Please contact Jacki Ball, Director of Government Affairs at [jball@PTA.org](mailto:jball@PTA.org) or 703-518-1243 with any questions and/or to arrange a meeting. Our association looks forward to working with you to provide a solution.

Sincerely,



James L. Accomando  
President  
National PTA



Nathan R. Monell, CAE  
Executive Director  
National PTA