

March 30, 2021

Senator Richard J. Durbin  
Chair  
United State Senate Committee on the Judiciary  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Durbin,

On behalf of the National Parent Teacher Association (National PTA), which comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools, we submit this statement for the record for the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Constitutional and Common Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence on March 23, 2021.

National PTA is the nation's oldest and largest child advocacy association, with congresses in all 50 states, DC, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Department of Defense schools in Europe. Since 1897, National PTA has been a strong advocate and a reputable resource for millions of parents, teachers, grandparents, caregivers, foster parents and other caring adults who share a commitment to improving the education, health and safety of all children. We speak with one voice for every child.

Earlier this month, National PTA and all PTA members nationwide were saddened to hear of the shooting that occurred at Watson Chapel Junior High. No parent should fear for the safety of their child every time they leave home for school or anywhere else and no child should live in fear every day wondering if this is the last day they will see their family. Thousands of children across the country have been victims of, or witnesses to gun violence in their homes, schools, or communities. The safety and health of all students, educators and staff must be the utmost priority. Like many other organizations committed to the well-being of our nation's children, National PTA has had to issue statements in response to mass shootings far too often. In each of these statements, we remind the nation that all students deserve to have a safe environment in which to thrive and learn. In every statement, we urge Congress to do more. National PTA firmly believes that now is time for Congress to act. Doing nothing is unacceptable.

For many years, National PTA has advocated for gun safety and violence prevention. Since 1990, our association has articulated the need for common-sense and comprehensive gun safety and violence prevention measures. Our nation's leaders must

acknowledge and address the ease of access to firearms and assault weapons. We must make every attempt to reduce violence, especially those incidents that involve firearms.

Combating gun violence remains a top priority of PTA, and we call on Congress and the Administration to immediately address the many factors that contribute to rampant gun violence in our country. **In particular, our association calls upon Congress and the Administration to:**

- Fund **research** on the causes and effects of gun violence on youth and communities, as well as evidence-based strategies to reduce gun violence;
- Establish robust **education programs** to teach students, parents and community members about gun safety and violence prevention;
- Promote the **safe storage of firearms** including the use of safety locks and other safety devices to prevent youth from obtaining and discharging a gun;
- Raise the **federal minimum age** to 21 to purchase handguns, shot guns and rifles from any type of dealer, improve enforcement of federal and state minimum age requirements for handgun purchases, and revoke the federal firearm license of a dealer who knowingly sells to minors;
- Require a **license to purchase** a handgun, require a special license for possession of a gun arsenal, and prohibit the sale of more than one handgun a month to any individual;
- Increase penalties for **the transfer** of handguns or semiautomatic assault weapons to juveniles for use in a crime;
- Encourage appropriate **evaluation and wrap-around services for students** who have brought a firearm to school;
- Require **universal background checks**, including a waiting period and requiring any individual or entity who sells a firearm to conduct background checks and fill out proper paperwork so that guns can be traced (including sales at gun shows, private transactions and online sales);
- Prohibit gun possession by those **convicted of spousal abuse and child abuse** and place restrictions on the purchase of guns by adults who have committed violent crimes as a juvenile;
- Restrict **internet gun sales**, including online sales of kits that can be used to make/modify guns, such as bump stocks;

- Require gun dealers to pay an increased annual license fee and mandate a federal tax on assault weapons ammunition;
- Ban access to military-style **semi-automatic assault weapons**, Saturday night special handguns, and non-sporting ammunition; and
- Require that all guns and other weapons, after being processed and released by the courts, shall not merely be dismantled, but **destroyed**.<sup>i</sup>

In recent years, our association has specifically advocated for the following pieces of federal legislation:

- **The Gun Violence Prevention Research Act of 2021** (H.R.825 / S.281)
- **The Gun Violence Research Act of 2017** (H.R. 1478)
- **The Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021** (H.R. 8)
- **The Background Check Expansion Act of 2019** (S. 42)
- **The Assault Weapons Ban of 2019** (H.R. 1296 / S. 66)
- **The STOP School Violence Act of 2018** (H.R. 4909)
- **The Fix NICS Act of 2017** (S. 2135 / H.R. 4434)

To be clear— gun ownership is not the issue here, the issue is the ease of access to firearms and assault weapons, especially for those who pose a danger to themselves and others. National PTA supports responsible gun ownership and has a rich history of advocating for the safety of children and youth. Our association is committed to federal efforts to protect children and youth from gun violence and strongly believes that Congress must enact legislation that will help prevent future tragedies from occurring while preserving the lawful use of firearms for sport and personal protection.

National PTA and its constituent bodies will continue to promote the establishment of, and support for legislation that improves youth and community safety and restrict guns to only responsible owners. Practical gun safety and violence prevention legislation will protect not just our children but all Americans from gun violence while at the same time respecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners. We must all work together to end gun violence.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please see the resources on our website<sup>ii</sup> or contact Amanda Lowe, National PTA Director of Government Affairs, at [alowe@pta.org](mailto:alowe@pta.org).

Sincerely,



Leslie Carrell Boggs  
President  
National PTA



Nathan R. Monell, CAE  
Executive Director  
National PTA

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<sup>i</sup> See “PTA Resolution on the Sale, Resale and Destruction of Firearms.” <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-PTA-Resolutions/Resolution-on-the-Sale-Resale-and-Destruction-of-Firearms>. See also “PTA Position Statement - Gun Safety and Violence Prevention.” <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-Position-Statements/Position-Statement-Gun-Safety-and-Violence-Prevention>.

<sup>ii</sup> See “PTA Advocacy: Gun Safety and Violence Prevention.” <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/federal-legislation/Public-Policy-Platform/gun-safety-and-violence-prevention>. See also “PTA Family Resources: School Safety.” <https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources/safety/School-Safety>.