May 9, 2019

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable José Serrano  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations,  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Shaheen / Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

As Congress works to finalize the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, the organizations co-signing this letter strongly urge you to fund the bipartisan STOP School Violence Act (Division S, Title V of Public Law 115–141) at a level of $125,000,000, a $25,000,000 increase over FY19 funding. This increased funding will allow even more states, localities, and tribes to provide evidence-based violence prevention programming to students and teachers. We also urge continuance of the FY19 funding allotments and language, furthering the strong focus on evidence-based school violence prevention programs.

Every year, there are thousands of acts of youth violence in our schools, including suicide, assault, bullying, and homicide. Research shows that youth often display warning signs and signals before taking any of these violent actions, as the majority of both students who complete suicide and school shooters tell someone of their plans or give another warning sign.

We are all too familiar with the places where terrible tragedies have occurred around the country in the last ten years – such as Sandy Hook Elementary, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, or Santa Fe High School – but there are tragedies that occur every day around the country. In 2017, 6,769 Americans between ages 10-24 completed suicide – a rate of over 18 per day.

In March 2018, Congress passed the STOP School Violence Act, which gives our students and educators the tools and support to take proactive steps towards stopping these tragedies. Already, states, localities, school districts, and Indian tribes are using this essential funding to provide evidence-based programs to train school personnel and students to identify warning signs and prevent tragedies such as suicide, mental health crisis, and interpersonal violence; develop and operate school-based teams to help receive, triage, and intervene when warning signs are reported; and create and implement anonymous reporting systems, among other allowable uses.

These funds help ensure that our children are given the opportunity to learn in safe environments, and we strongly urge Congress to support this funding level and language for the STOP School Violence Act.
Sincerely,

2020 Mom
AASA, The School Superintendents Association
America SCORES
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Federation of School Administrators
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action
EDGE Consulting Partners
First Focus Campaign for Children
Forum for Youth Investment
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Eating Disorders Association
National PTA
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
SchoolHouse Connection
The Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America