Every child deserves to learn in a safe and supportive environment and to have the opportunity to grow into a happy and healthy adult. There is no greater shared responsibility among school leaders, teachers, parents, public safety officials, community members and decisionmakers than keeping students safe at school. PTA recognizes that there must be a balance between the physical security of our schools and the physiological safety of our students, which is why we are dedicated to ensuring our schools have both the necessary physical security measures and the necessary student support services to keep our students safe.

### WE ADVOCATE TO

- Provide and connect students with necessary behavioral and mental health resources at school and in their community
- Improve access to and funding for qualified school-based health and wellness practitioners, such as school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists and school social workers
- Encourage schools to refrain from arming educators and other school personnel
- Require all decisions related to physical security measures—including the use of School Resource Officers (SROs)—to be locally determined, collaborative and incorporate input from students, parents, families, educators, school leaders and the community
- Encourage schools to use positive school discipline policies and behavioral interventions and supports that are effective, fair and consistently implemented

### THE DATA

- **34%** of parents feared for their child’s safety at school in 2018, a 22% increase from 2013 [1]
- **76%** of parents are more supportive of spending money on mental health services for students than spending money on armed guards in school [1]
- **63%** of parents oppose allowing armed educators and staff in schools [1]
- **1 in 5** schools do not have a school counselor [2]

African American students are **three** times more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students [3]

Students with disabilities are **twice** as likely to receive an out of school suspension than students without disabilities [4]
VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Marguerite Herman comes from a state where the school safety discussion tends to primarily focus on arming educators and “hardening” schools (adding physical security measures to school buildings, such as metal detectors). Marguerite passionately felt that the conversation around school safety in Wyoming—and across the country—was ignoring the deep need for mental health and student support services.

When Marguerite learned that the Federal Commission on School Safety was traveling to Wyoming to hear from the public about school safety, she was worried that the commission would only hear from those who support hardening schools. She knew she needed to take action, so she volunteered to testify before the commission on the importance of providing students with a positive school environment, behavioral and mental health services and ensuring parents are involved in all school safety-related decisions.

Marguerite’s testimony was heard by representatives of the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as members of the public who watched the listening session on livestream.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR SAFE AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

National PTA has endorsed and contributed content to supplemental resources related to the Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, a comprehensive school safety resource [5]. It outlines evidence-based policies and practices for improving school safety and increasing access to mental health supports for children and youth. The framework encourages policymakers to design and implement a comprehensive, school-wide approach to school safety that addresses the school environment, safety and learning as interconnected issues. You can check out National PTA’s guides for parents on how to engage in school safety at PTA.org/SchoolSafety.