



State of Connecticut
Governor Dannel P. Malloy

August 28, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
LBJ Education Building
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

We write to express our dismay at recent reports that you are considering allowing federal Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant funding to be allocated toward the purchase of firearms. At a time when states and municipalities are struggling to adequately fund education, it is completely misguided and negligent to make federal grants available for the sake of arming teachers. Those of us who have spent time in a classroom understand that the goal of policymakers should be to foster healthier environments for children to grow and thrive. Any real and serious discussion around school safety must focus on creating positive school climates not introducing dangerous weapons into our schools.

If it is truly your goal to make our classrooms safer, there are many commonsense ways to do so that do not involve turning educators – most of whom lack formal firearm training – into armed security guards. For instance, federal funding should be directed towards hiring and training teachers, stocking classrooms with books, supplies and technology, increased social-emotional learning, a commitment to restorative practices, greater access to mental health services, and investment in school-based health centers.

The problem of school gun violence will not go away on its own and needs to be addressed head-on as we have done in Connecticut. We have passed some of the toughest gun laws in the nation, which include a ban on the sale and purchase of assault-style weapons, new eligibility rules for the purchase of ammunition, a prohibition on the sale or purchase of magazines carrying more than 10 rounds and the requirement for universal background checks. We have also increased focus on school-based diversion initiatives to reduce juvenile justice involvement among youth with mental health needs. And we have invested over \$50 million toward improving security infrastructure at our schools without compromising the learning environment. In short, we have shown that it is possible to fortify our schools without turning them into fortresses. These are just some of the steps we have taken at the state-level to make sure our schools are places where students feel welcome, safe and ready to learn.

Arming teachers is not the answer to solving school gun violence. In addition to being dangerous, bad for the educational climate in our schools and potentially foster profoundly negative impacts in our classrooms, our teachers simply did not sign up to be armed guards. Teaching is already a tremendously difficult job – without having the additional burden of simultaneously carrying a firearm throughout the school day. Instead of continuing to entertain this ill-conceived and reckless proposal, I urge you to listen to the hundreds of thousands of Americans who this will affect - students, educators, lawmakers and law enforcement officials – all of whom pushed back on this notion when first introduced by President Trump.

We urge you to abandon this ill-conceived and dangerous idea.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Dannel P. Malloy in black ink.

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Handwritten signature of Dianna R. Wentzell in black ink.

Dianna R. Wentzell
Commissioner
Connecticut State Department of Education