

# Ways to Protect Students and Prevent Gun Violence

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**For too long, Congress has failed to take common-sense steps to end the uniquely American epidemic of gun violence and mass shootings. America’s gun homicide rate is 25 times the average of other developed countries. On an average day, 96 Americans are killed with guns. As a country, we can and must do more to ensure that everyone who walks through our schools’ doors — educators, students, parents or community members — is safe and free from violence. [According to Everytown for Gun Safety](#), there have been nearly 300 school shootings since 2013.**

- ▶ **Take common-sense steps to ensure dangerous weapons do not end up in dangerous hands**
  - Require *universal* background checks for guns bought in stores, online, or at gun shows — *anywhere*.
  - Ban assault-style weapons, high-capacity magazines, and bump stocks.
  - Lift the prohibition on gun violence research and study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ▶ **Dramatically expand our focus on mental health**
  - Increase funding and access to school-based health centers and their staffs, such as the Mental Health in Schools Act (H.R. 2913/S. 1370). Proper diagnosis can and often starts in our schools, yet there is a shortage of counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists in public education.
  - Increase access to mental health services by making them a mandatory part of healthcare coverage. This includes closing loopholes that allow state and local governments to opt-out of providing mental healthcare.
  - Expand and increase professional development for educators in the areas of bullying, mental and behavioral health, cultural competencies, and classroom management.
- ▶ **Holistic approach to school safety**
  - We cannot turn our schools into de facto prisons. Reject the notion that we need to arm educators. We need fewer guns in schools, not more. Educators should be educating their students, not acting as armed security guards. Prohibit the use of any federal funding for the purchase or use of firearms in schools (i.e. arming educators).
  - Finally, we must avoid going back to failed zero-tolerance school discipline policies that we know do nothing to improve school climate. Instead, ensure safeguards are in place to prevent unnecessary and unjust expulsion of students of color and other marginalized communities and deny them due process rights. The Trump administration’s stated plan of repealing existing school discipline guidance is irrelevant to this debate and should not go forward.
  - Increase funding for Title IV of ESSA, which is a grant program designed to provide students a well-rounded education. Title IV includes supporting safe and healthy students by expanding access to school-based mental health services, and drug and violence prevention.