

July 1, 2019

The Honorable Thomas Massie
2453 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Thomas Massie:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our strong opposition to the reintroduction of the Safe Students Act (H.R. 3200).

As an organization committed to the health and safety of all children in the United States, we are extremely concerned with the attempt to undermine a vital protection for children, the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990. This act makes it unlawful for an individual to knowingly possess a firearm at a place that the individual knows or has reasonable cause to believe is a school zone.¹ With gun violence occurring at an alarming rate, allowing guns in schools or in close proximity to schools will put even more children at risk and will not prevent shootings from occurring.

In 2018 alone, there were 97 school gun incidents nationwide, the largest number recorded since 1970.² A total of 202 people have been killed and 454 people have been injured from school shootings since 1970, most of them children.³ Research shows that children who attended schools where school shootings have occurred are more likely to exhibit poor mental health outcomes later in life, suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, and have trouble forming relationships, in addition to other negative consequences to their education.⁴ Children deserve to be and feel safe in their school environments, and eradicating gun-free school zones will not reduce gun violence in schools.

According to research on right to carry laws, policies that allow civilians to carry guns on campuses are unlikely to result in fewer mass shootings or fewer casualties from school shootings.⁵ In an analysis of all high-fatality shootings since 1966, almost 90 percent have occurred in locations where civilian guns have been allowed.⁶ The Gun-Free School Zone Act protects students and schools by deterring criminal activity and the unlawful use of a firearm to perpetrate violence. Removing these protections would allow more guns to be present in the school environment, which increases the risk for violence in a place where no child should feel unsafe.

¹ United States. Cong. Senate. "Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990." 101st Cong., 2nd sess. S 2070. Washington: GPO, 1990. Web.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/senate-bill/2070/text>

² Riedman, David and Desmond O'Neill. "CHDS – K-12 School Shooting Database." *Center for Homeland Defense and Security*. Naval Postgraduate School, accessed 8 July, 2019. <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/dataset/>

³ Cai, Weiyi and Jugal K. Patel. "A Half-Century of School Shootings Like Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 11 May 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/11/us/school-shootings-united-states.html>

⁴ Beland, Louis-Philippe and Dongwoo Kim. "The Effect of High School Shootings on Schools and Student Performance." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 38.1 (2016): 113-126. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373715590683>

⁵ Daniel W. Webster et al. "Firearms on College Campuses: Research Evidence and Policy Implications." *Center for Gun Policy and Research*. Johns Hopkins University 132 (2016). http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/_pdfs/GunsOnCampus.pdf.

⁶ Ibid.

As an organization committed to the well-being of children, we strongly oppose any legislation that would threaten vital protections for children. Gun-free school zones were created so that children can attend school to learn, and not live in fear of gun violence. Eliminating these protections will put children at greater risk of harm, and we strongly oppose H.R. 3200.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley, President

CC:

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Doug Collins
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Karen Bass
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
and Homeland Security

The Honorable John Ratcliffe
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism,
and Homeland