

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Minority Whip
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives Washington,
D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
House Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The parents and children of Robb Elementary in Uvalde, Texas, were once again failed by a broken political system that allowed a mass murderer to enter into an unprotected school. We are not just heartbroken but also furious with the lack of accountability from our elected representatives. When so many solutions are available to us, why have we chosen to ignore the solution that will protect our innocent schoolchildren at the point of attack?

Instead, we continue to see school employees shielding children with their bodies —the only tool they have to protect children— many giving their lives in the process. Further, on May 7th, 2019, a hero student, Kendrick Castillo, charged one of the killers in the STEM School shooting in Colorado, saving a classroom full of his friends, absorbing the fatal shots in the process. Students should never have to make that choice, to die protecting their friends. They should have well-trained and armed adults there to defend the lives of their students.

There are real solutions that protect our children and respect our rights.

We are calling for all Members of Congress to support allowing school staff to carry a concealed firearm if they so choose.

According to a 2019 study from the Crime Prevention Research Center, no school which allows armed school staff has a single case of someone being wounded or killed from a shooting between the hours of 6 AM and midnight on school days.ⁱ Furthermore, police support school staff who choose to carry a concealed firearm to school: 81% of polled officers have expressed support for itⁱⁱ, as well as nearly 60% of likely voters.ⁱⁱⁱ

This is a safe and now, an increasingly popular, policy.

The mass murderers in Buffalo New York^{iv}, Aurora, Colorado^{v and vi}; Santa Barbara, California^{vii}; Charleston, South Carolina^{viii}; Orlando, Florida^{ix}; Detroit, Michigan^x; and El Paso, Texas^{xi} purportedly chose their targets because they knew they were attacking gun free zones, or places which limited citizens' ability to legally have a concealed carry weapon.

Gun-free zones make people less safe, and nowhere does it matter more than our nation's school campuses.

A well-trained and armed school staffer can respond to a threat immediately since they are already on site. We support the use of School Resource Officers, but they have their limitations. Their numbers are limited, they are known to the prospective killer, and they are often shared among numerous school campuses. One School Resource Officer costs about \$75,000 - \$98,000.^{xii} That

sum can be used to train multiple teachers and staff, not just pay for one School Resource Officer. More school staff members who choose to be armed will be in more locations with the school campus simultaneously, compared to just School Resource Officers. This approach is not only better for our children and educators, it is a much lower financial burden for school districts. But even if costs are still a concern, some private groups raise private funds to support school security.^{xiii}

There are many community-based programs —both private and non-profit— which can train school staff to be effective at stopping a mass shooter. Police, former military, or civilians with experience in training defensive use of firearms, can all help train educators to be safe, effective, and coordinated in handling firearms and responding to a potentially fatal threat. With so many options to receive training from experts, it is inconceivable to us that anyone would object to allowing school employees to exercise their Constitutional rights at work, and defend innocent life in the process.

We must also recommend that any training that is required for teachers should not be more onerous than what is required of law enforcement for that same specific skill-set. School employees have been trained all over the country to be effective guardians on campus, and are attending high-level training.

Our love and admiration for these school staffers, as well as students, compels us to write this letter. Even when left defenseless by state and federal law, these school staff members —teachers, coaches, counselors, and more— will protect our children at the cost of their lives.^{xiv}

One of the teachers at Robb Elementary in Uvalde was “found embracing children in her arms pretty much until her last breath.”^{xv} That teacher is a hero who loved those children. But the law never gave her or any other teacher the choice to arm themselves. This failure made the Uvalde mass murder all the more likely to happen. There are many examples of teachers acting as human shields or even attacking a murderer with nothing more than their bare hands.

School teachers and staff have the mindset to protect children, their sacrifices make this clear. We must give them the choice to use all means necessary to protect themselves and their students. Legislation such as Representative Thomas Massie’s H.R.7415, the *Safe Students Act*, would put an end to schools being dangerous gun-free zones, which is where 94% of mass shootings occur.^{xvi} The *Deadly Gun Free School Zones Act* was put in place over thirty years ago and since then mass shootings at schools have only increased. Criminals don’t follow the law. We know this.

It is with heavy but optimistic hearts that we ask all you and your colleagues to make choices that we know will save the lives of those most precious to us —our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Laura Carno
Executive Director of FASTER Colorado

Joe Eaton
Program Director of FASTER Saves Lives

John and Maria Castillo
Parents of the Hero of STEM School, Kendrick Castillo

Evan Todd
Father and Columbine Survivor

Brett Titus
Retired METRO SWAT/K9 Officer and CEO of LifeSpot

Sean Maloney
Founder and Attorney for Second Call Defense

Steve Reams
Sheriff, Weld County Colorado

Deborah Flora
President and Founder, Parents United America

Lesley Hollywood
Founder and Director, Rally for our Rights

Steve Rosenoff
22-Year Veteran Teacher (retired), Lacey, Washington
Brian E. Rau, Ph.D.
Superintendent, Manchester Local School District, Ohio

Charles McMahan
Superintendent, Porter Consolidated Schools, Oklahoma

Erik Bostick
Teacher, Mad River Local Schools, Ohio

ⁱ John R. Lott, *Crime Prevention Research Center*, Schools that Allow Teachers to Carry Guns are Extremely Safe: Data on the Rate of Shootings and Accidents in Schools that allow Teachers to Carry, 29 May 2019

ⁱⁱ Police One, <https://www.gunowners.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PoliceOnes-2013-Gun-Policy-Law-Enforcement-Survey-Results.pdf> (March 2013)

ⁱⁱⁱ Solange Reyner, "Poll: Majority Says Arming Teachers Would Make Schools Safer", *Newsmax*, at: <https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/teachers-guns-poll/2022/06/01/id/1072493/>

^{iv} See shooter's manifesto

^v Maria L. La Ganga, "James Holmes' notebook: Opposing views of Aurora shooter's mind-set," *Los Angeles Times* (May 26, 2015), at: www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-holmes-notebook-evidence-20150526-story.html

^{vi} John Lott Jr., "Did Colorado shooter single out Cinemark Theater because it banned guns?" *Fox News* (September 10, 2012), at: <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/did-colorado-shooter-single-out-cinemark-theater-because-it-banned-guns>

^{vii} John Lott, "Do Mentally Ill, Multiple Victim Killers Purposefully Pick Targets Where Victims Are Most Vulnerable?: The Case of Elliot Rodger," *Crime Prevention Research Center* (May 26, 2014), at: <https://crimeresearch.org/2014/05/do-mentally-ill-multiple-victim-killers-purposefully-pick-targets-where-victims-are-most-vulnerable-the-case-of-elliott-rodgers/>

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- viii "Friend of Dylann Roof says suspect planned attack on College of Charleston," *Fox News* (June 20, 2015), at: www.foxnews.com/us/friend-of-dylann-roof-says-suspect-planned-attack-on-college-of-charleston
- ix John Bickley, "Pulse Terrorist's Widow Acquitted: Here's What You Need To Know" *DailyWire* (March 30, 2018), at: <https://www.dailywire.com/news/pulse-terrorists-widow-acquitted-heres-what-you-james-barrett>
- x John Lott, "Why terrorists target gun-free zones" *New York Post* (June 15, 2016), at: <https://nypost.com/2016/06/15/why-terrorists-target-gun-free-zones/>
- xi Walmart Shooter Manifesto
- xii Edward W Hill, " The cost of arming schools: The Price of Stopping a Bad Guy with a Gun " (March 2013) at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289126514_The_cost_of_arming_schools_The_Price_of_Stopping_a_Bad_Guy_with_a_Gun
- xiii Faster Colorado, at: https://i2i.org/wp-content/uploads/FASTER_Myths.pdf
- xiv Madeline Will, "Teachers in Texas Shooting Died Trying to Shield Students, Their Families Say", (May 25, 2022), at: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/teachers-in-texas-shooting-died-trying-to-shield-students-their-families-say/2022/05>
- xv *New York Times*, (June 9, 2022) at: <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/05/26/us/texas-elementary-school-shooting#irma-garcia-one-of-the-killed-teachers-was-like-a-second-mom-to-her-students>
- xvi "UPDATED: Mass Public Shootings keep occurring in Gun-Free Zones: 94% of attacks since 1950" *Crime Prevention Research Center* (July 6, 2019) at: <https://crimeresearch.org/2018/06/more-misleading-information-from-bloombergs-everytown-for-gun-safety-on-guns-analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings/>