

Written Statement to the Senate Gun Violence Prevention Workgroup - Pro

September 12, 2025

Dear Chair Ron Latz, Chair Zaynab Mohamed, and the members of the Senate Gun Violence Prevention Workgroup,

The first week of school is supposed to be filled with establishing new friendships, meeting new educators, and forming new academic routines. Rather, students in Minnesota started this school year with new fears and exposure to traumatic gun violence. As Minnesotans, we are responsible for coming together as a community to ensure that these events are prevented in the future. The impact and outcomes of the mass shooting that took place at Annunciation in South Minneapolis will be felt for years to come—not only for those who were there, but also for those in our Minnesota community. For some, the pain and loss will last a lifetime. Fears of gun violence and exposure to trauma have become the grim routine for children in our schools. Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States ([NEA School Gun Violence Prevention and Response Guide, 2024](#)), and in 2025 alone, there have been at least 100 incidents of gunfire on school grounds that have amounted to 32 deaths and 98 injuries ([Everytown, 2025](#)). Although these are numbers we are presenting, it's important to recognize that behind every death and injury reported, there are thousands more who carry long lasting trauma from having to run, hide, or fight for their lives. We must legislate for the future of our children like their lives depend on it because they do.

As a group of Minnesotan school psychologists, we are trained in psychological first aid, and provide support to our school communities in times of crisis and tragedy. Yet, we are not immune to the fears of violence felt by our students, their caregivers, and our educator peers. Although the primary goal of educators is to teach, the reality of working in U.S. schools comes with difficult truths: educators must be constantly aware of the number of exits and windows, the quickest procedures for locking the doors and securing classrooms, the appropriate materials for barricading entries and creating weapons for defense. Stemming from necessity in our reality, educators have considered what they would do if they encountered an armed assailant in a hallway and wondered if they would ever have to shield their students from gunfire with their own bodies.

From her own experience, a school psychologist in a metro school stated, "I will never forget the amount of fear in my body but doing my best to seem calm for the students. All I kept thinking was that I didn't know if our door was locked; I knew we would be okay if the door was locked because in previous shootings, rarely if ever, the shooter has caused harm through a locked door; but if the door was unlocked, I prepared myself to shield as many students as possible... Anytime we hear of another school shooting, my co-workers and I are brought back to that day; I'm sure our former students feel the same." Although noble and heroic of this school psychologist to be prepared to protect her students, being a human shield for gunfire is nowhere in her job description. Yet, every day, we expect our educators to put their lives on the line when they wake up, simply, to go to work.

Each time the United States reports another school shooting, citizens of this country go through the same desensitized cycle: breaking news, horror, outrage, prayers, silence. Rinse and repeat. Families are left to mourn the loss of their loved ones as the nation moves on to the next news story. Only now, the next news story is often another mass shooting. The United States could be known globally for leading in innovation, freedom of speech, and popular culture; rather, the nation leads in mass shootings and gun violence ([Lopez, 2022](#)). We must join other developed nations and take meaningful and immediate action to protect our children, and ensure our schools are the safest space for all learners. Minnesota can honor those who have been victims of gun violence by leading in legislation that protects our youth, educators, families, and neighbors.

We urge our Minnesotan legislators to protect the communities who voted for them to hold these positions of power. The Senate can and should propose legislation that other countries have held for decades such as waiting periods to purchase firearms, mandatory firearm safety courses, detailed background checks, limits on large-capacity magazines, required licensing and registration of firearms, and bans on military-style firearms and ammunition ([Masters, 2022](#)).

There has never been a more pressing time in our nation's history for making policy changes to benefit our youth, educators, and communities. Many of the adults who now send their children to schools are the same adults who were exposed to gun violence at the turn of the millennium. These adults have experienced countless mass tragedies, been witness to personal and vicarious trauma, and worry that sending their children to school in the morning will be the last time they see them alive. Watching people massacred by firearms is no longer just an event experienced in warfields or seen in movies—massacres are happening in our schools, and we are complicit in allowing children to experience the most horrifying events in their classrooms

This statement is blunt because to speak otherwise would be disrespectful to the victims of gun violence in our schools. It also comes from a place of frustration, anger, and deep love for our youth and peers, knowing that our leaders have never taken steps to protect our students, educators, and communities. After Columbine, we as a nation did nothing. After Red Lake, we did nothing. After Virginia Tech, we did nothing. After Sandy Hook, we did nothing. After Isla Vista, we did nothing. After Parkland, we did nothing. After Uvalde, we did nothing. After Annunciation, we as Minnesotans have a chance to do something; however we must act quickly because in the time since the mass shooting at Annunciation, we have already witnessed another school shooting at Evergreen High School in Colorado. We have had so many opportunities to make a change and yet, we sit passively. Now is not the time for Minnesota Nice. Now is the time for Minnesota Action. As educators working in our schools we are continuously left with one question after each incident of mass violence: Are we as a nation not outraged, disgusted, and appalled by children and educators dying by gunfire?

We, as school psychologists, believe that the approach to ensuring the safety of our nation's children lies at the nexus of expanded mental health services **and** gun sense legislation. Again, other nations do not share the same fears that U.S. parents and caregivers do as they send their children to school. After each school shooting, the sentiment of "hug your children tight" is always shared. What if

parents and caregivers got to hug their children everyday, rather than for the last time before the next school shooting? Globally, youth spend their days learning the skills they need to reach their individual goals and meet their civic duties. They develop friendships with one another and make progress towards living fruitful adult lives. We should want that life for our children. Importantly, we should want to see our children reach and thrive in adulthood. Now, we have a chance to take that first step. We recognize that the road to creating legislation in such a polarized political climate is fraught, but as Minnesotans, we need to take difficult actions to keep our community safe. Loving and supporting each other is what Minnesotans do.

We urge our Senators to stand for the wellbeing of our youth by passing legislation to protect them from gun violence and support their mental health needs. To do anything less would place us back into the same desensitized cycle: breaking news, horror, outrage, prayers, silence.

Signed,

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References

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