

## **ASBO INTERNATIONAL U.S. LEGISLATIVE BELIEFS ADDENDUM**

### **Policy Recommendations to Address Gun-Related Violence & Improve the Safety of Our Schools**

ASBO International believes that all students, educators, and families deserve to have safe schools and communities that are free from violence, intimidation, and fear. Students cannot learn, educators cannot teach, and parents cannot send their children to school if they feel unsafe, anxious, or afraid.

ASBO International recognizes the unique challenges our members face as they educate, care for, and protect the students they serve. While every school district should have comprehensive districtwide and school emergency preparedness policies, plans, and procedures to keep schools safe from a variety of threats—including gun violence—educators cannot and should not carry this burden alone. They need substantial resources and support from local, state, and federal authorities and agencies to coordinate crisis prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts.

To support school business leaders in ensuring all students can receive a high-quality, inclusive, and equitable education in secure and nurturing learning environments, ASBO International proposes the following federal policy recommendations to address gun-related violence and improve the safety of our nation's schools.

#### **1. Enact common-sense federal gun safety legislation to protect students, educators, and families.**

- Increase federal funding for rigorous research to identify the root causes of gun violence, the impact of school safety strategies on school shootings, and how to prevent gun violence in schools.
- Increase enforcement of existing gun control and safety laws.
- Prevent access to dangerous weapons by those deemed at risk of hurting themselves or others. Prevent individuals convicted of violent crimes, hate crimes, and domestic abuse from purchasing or owning a gun. Prevent individuals with mental health issues from purchasing or owning a gun.
- Require background checks for all gun purchasers involved in firearm sales and transfers.

## **2. Invest in mental health programs, resources, and professionals to support schools and communities.**

- Increase investments in and update and streamline the school-based Medicaid program to provide schools with sustainable funding for mental health personnel and services. Collaborate with states and districts to expand access to Medicaid-reimbursable mental and behavioral health services in schools.
- Support dedicated funding for higher education institutions to partner with school districts to build sustainable labor pipelines of school mental health professionals. Increase funding for programs that can help recruit, train, and retain school psychologists, social workers, mental health counselors, and other specialized support staff—especially in high-need communities. (For example, the Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program supports innovative partnerships to train school-based mental health service providers to work in schools and districts.)
- Enhance coordination and collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to assist schools and school-based providers with addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of students, educators, and communities, including identifying grant opportunities to support related initiatives.
- Expand access to and increase investments in school- and community-based mental health programs and services, including for suicide prevention, crisis intervention, trauma recovery, substance use treatment, violence prevention and intervention, bullying and cyberbullying prevention, etc.

## **3. Provide funding to support school safety, security, and crisis prevention, management, and recovery.**

- Increase funding for Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act to support safe and healthy schools. (For example, Title IV-A, the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant, provides flexible funding to support safe and healthy students and improve school climate. Title IV-F, National Activities for School Safety, provides grants to help school communities prevent and recover from violent or traumatic events, transform school climate, and provide student mental health services.)
- Re-establish funding for Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) grants, which help schools prevent, mitigate, respond to, and recover from crises.
- Increase funding for the STOP School Violence Act and COPS Office Grants, which can provide schools with funding to purchase security equipment; invest in evidence-based facility hardening (e.g., metal detectors, locks, lighting, etc.); school resource officers (SROs); fund professional development to identify and address student violence; conduct threat assessments; establish school threat assessment and crisis intervention teams; use technology to assist with anonymous reporting and school-wide communications during an emergency; coordinate with local law enforcement to improve security on school grounds; and implement other measures to improve school safety.
- Enhance coordination and collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Homeland Security to assist schools with identifying grant opportunities, best practices, tools, and resources to improve school facility safety and security.

We must all work together to prevent future gun-related tragedies from occurring in our schools and communities—the lives and futures of our children, teachers, administrators, parents, and families depend on it.

To end the U.S. gun violence epidemic, we must seriously acknowledge and address the many underlying causes of gun-related violence. This requires—at the bare minimum—a comprehensive federal policy approach that addresses gun safety, mental health, and school security issues. Addressing only one aspect by implementing one program or policy alone will not significantly reduce gun violence; only by applying a holistic approach can we achieve real change and overcome this lethal issue.

ASBO International urges federal lawmakers to act swiftly to end gun-related violence in our schools and communities. Pass legislation that will increase gun safety and prevent dangerous weapons from getting into the wrong hands; increase investments in mental health programs, services, and professionals; and provide sufficient funding to help districts improve the safety and security of their facilities to keep children and educators safe at school.

We stand ready to partner with lawmakers to stop gun violence in our communities once and for all. ASBO International and its members are here to share information and expertise on school finance, operations, and risk management issues to help ensure all our schools are safe for students, parents, families, and community members to enjoy.

**Questions?** Contact ASBO International Director of Advocacy, Elleka Yost, at 866.682.2729 or [asbousa@asbointl.org](mailto:asbousa@asbointl.org).