



Great Public Schools
for Every Student

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December 6, 2022

Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association, who teach and support nearly 50 million students across our nation, we urge you to vote YES on the bipartisan Preventing Suicide Through Voluntary Firearm Purchase Delay Act (H.R. 8361) during markup of the bill. NEA joins organizations including the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the Depression and Bipolar Alliance, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and the Suicide Awareness Voices of Education in supporting the legislation.

Educators support H.R. 8361 because it helps to address one aspect of our nation's gun violence epidemic—specifically, gun suicides. The legislation would enable individuals, if they experience a mental health emergency, to voluntarily place themselves on a “do not sell” list that would keep them from accessing a gun at a later time to harm themselves or others.

Six out of 10 gun deaths in the United States are suicides, a continuing trend since at least the 1980s, [according to the Pew Research Center](#). This dovetails with a mental-health crisis among students so severe that the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association have declared it [a national emergency](#). The Centers for Disease Control found that in 2021, 1 in 5 high school students considered suicide. Suicide was the [third leading cause of death](#) for young people ages 15 to 24 in 2020.

NEA members see students every day who suffer from high levels of stress, grief, and fear, all of which were amplified by the disruption and isolation of the pandemic and by the nearly 50 school shootings this year. Educators are committed to nurturing, comforting, and mentoring students. But dedication cannot overcome the need for commonsense gun reforms to keep schools and communities safe; the acute shortage of school counselors and other educators; and the need for school-based mental health care, issues that are most severe in communities of color where the pandemic and gun violence continue to be especially devastating.

We urge you to vote YES on the Preventing Suicide Through Voluntary Firearm Purchase Delay Act as a step in the right direction, and ask that you support additional measures to protect students, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marc Egan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association