

Dear members of the task force,

My name is Adelheid Koepfer, I am mom to 3 school age children in Wallingford, CT, and as such wanted to voice my opinion regarding school safety.

I appreciate very much the three-prong approach of this task force, and I strongly support gun violence prevention as well as an upgrade of mental health services. However, I do not approve of the idea to have armed guards at all schools.

1. It won't work. There were armed guards at various mass shooting sites, who could not prevent the unfolding of the tragic events.
2. It is way too expensive. Please let our school districts spend education budgets on teachers and facilities / supplies, not on gun manufacturers.
3. It is too dangerous. The risks of having fire arms in a building with so many children and civilians are too manifold.

I understand school districts are trying to do all they can to control access to the building and monitor what goes on during the day. I don't mind showing my ID each time I visit one of my children's schools, which as a class room volunteer and PTO member I do quite often. But I think we can only truly decrease the risk of more gun violence by reducing the number of guns available to the public, not by having more guns at schools.

Instead, I think schools should be the place where our children learn academic AND social skills, throughout their educational career. How about funding more in-school and after-school programs, providing opportunities for children and youth to learn and practice those skills? Let them do meaningful community work, from bike repair to farming, from performing arts an sport events to financial skills, from board games where you learn to keep playing even when you seem to lose, to STEM projects that could help solve real world challenges... I'd rather see my tax money go to those programs, especially for young adults, but basically for all ages, than to armed guards!

Two words to violent video games and gun culture: be it out of boredom, underlying fear or a sense of loss due to economic constraints, health issues, or yet another storm - weapons seem to offer an easy way to feel in control of events and to blow away any obstacles. But this will not help our children to learn how to cope with real world challenges.

Instead, as said before, I think in- and out-of-school education should teach our children how to survive failure, repair, build, construct, cooperate and communicate, and take their minds off of destructive activities. Children (and adults, for that matter) who have a sense of being part of and contributing to a community are less likely to commit violent acts against this community. There are enough challenges out there, let them be part of the solution!

I think our children should be able to grow up knowing that they don't need a gun to be safe. Not at school, and neither anywhere else. Please let them grow up as kids, not inmates. And please bear this in mind for any legislation regarding school safety. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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