

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos,

On Tuesday, June 5th, you appeared before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education, and Related Agencies to provide testimony on President Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Education Budget Request. We write seeking clarification regarding your remarks on the Trump Administration's Federal Commission on School Safety ("Commission"). Below is the exchange in question:

Senator Leahy: *Will your commission look at the role of firearms as it relates to gun violence in our schools?*

Sec. DeVos: *That is not part of the commission's charge, per se.*

Senator Leahy: *I see. So, you're studying gun violence but not considering the role of guns.*

Sec. DeVos: *We're actually studying student school safety and how we can ensure our students are safe at school*

The Commission was charged with recommending policies and funding proposals to prevent school violence.¹ A core element of combatting school violence is addressing gun violence, both in school and in our communities. The U.S. has the highest rate of gun ownership per capita than any other country and has the highest rate of global mass shooters.² In a report released in March 2018,³ nearly 60 percent of high school students fear gun violence at school or in their communities. Additionally, nearly 40 percent of children exposed to a shooting in their school or community will experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Mental health disorders, anxiety, and fear are on the rise in children and parents due to gun violence in school, in communities, or experienced second hand by watching events unfold on social media.⁴

Although the Commission cannot amend gun laws, the Commission can study and develop "meaningful and actionable recommendations to keep students safe at school,"⁵ which may

¹ [Fact Sheet](#): President Donald J. Trump is Taking Immediate Actions to Secure Our Schools

² How the US Gun Culture Compares with the World in Five Charts (CNN, [March 2018](#))

³ Protecting the Parkland Generation (Giffords Law Center, [March 2018](#))

⁴ Generation Parkland: How Mass Shootings are Affecting America's Children – And How We Can Help (NBC News, [March 2018](#))

⁵ Trump's School Safety Commission Won't Look at Guns, Betsy DeVos Says (NYT, [June 2018](#))

include policy recommendations to Congress or regulatory actions for other agencies. Thus, the testimony provided on June 5 runs in conflict with the direction of the Commission. Further, a conversation on school safety void of the discussion of guns ignores a significant root of the problem.

To provide clarification to the general public, please provide a written response that explains how the Federal Commission on School Safety will, in fact, study and provide policy recommendations regarding gun violence prevention measures as part of a comprehensive approach to ensure school safety.

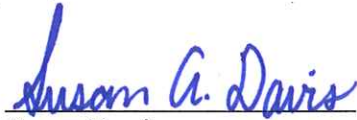
Sincerely,



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



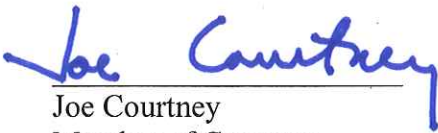
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Ranking Member, Committee on
Education and the Workforce



Susan Davis
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



Gregorio Kilili Sablan
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



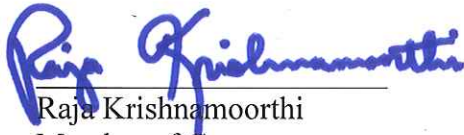
Alma S. Adams
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress