

Talking Points Responding to Calls for More Police and Armed Personnel in Schools

Funneling money to more police and/or armed school staff is not the answer to preventing violence in schools. We need to invest in counselors, social workers, Restorative Justice Coordinators, Community Intervention Workers and other supportive school staff that actually create safer schools.

- **It Won't Solve the Problem: There is no evidence armed personnel will make schools safer during a school shooting**
 - Armed police were present at [Virginia Tech](#), [Columbine](#) and [Parkland](#).
 - The majority of mass shootings end [when the shooter decides to end them](#), not by intervention by law enforcement, according to a FBI study.
- **It Causes Harm: Armed personnel pose a safety threat to students and other school staff**
 - Students are already facing violence from armed and unarmed law enforcement in their schools, [including fatal](#) and [life-threatening](#) injuries.
 - Even trained police can miss their targets more than [4 out of 5 times](#) in gun fire, according to an NYPD study.
 - [Students of color](#), especially Black students, face the greatest risks. School-based arrests rates and [corporal punishment](#) are much higher for [Black and Latino students](#), and studies have shown that subjects are more likely to shoot Black individuals in [split-second situations](#), and we already see the [tragic consequences](#). There has been an [increase in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment](#) in schools, and students are already feeling fearful.
- **It Creates More Problems: More police lead to more students being arrested for school discipline related incidents**
 - When police are in schools [they tend to get involved in school discipline](#), escalating incidents that might have been resolved by a trip to the principal's office into involvement in the criminal justice system.
 - Having police in schools and [punitive school cultures](#) makes it less likely that students [will trust adults in the building](#) to come forward with concerns they may have about other students.
 - For immigrant and undocumented students, bringing police into the school building [can lead to deportation for themselves](#) or their families.
- **We Need Real Safety: Preventing violence in schools requires both long-term and short-term solutions**
 - [Social and emotional learning](#) and [Restorative Justice](#) teach young people how to manage their emotions and [respond to conflicts in healthy ways](#)

- [Counselors, wrap-around services and strong relationships with caring adults give struggling students support](#), and keep students who may need interventions from falling through the cracks.
- Having entrances and halls monitored by supportive school staff (like Community Intervention Workers and Peacebuilders) who know the student body well can preemptively address issues as they come up, intervene as conflicts arise, and quickly identify when something is wrong that requires an emergency response.
- School Resource Officers are police, not counselors or social workers. Students deserve trained mental health professionals, and telling students they can go to an SRO for counseling (when the SRO can report their conversations as part of a criminal investigation) is ineffective and can lead to negative consequences.
- **Quick facts related to the Parkland Shooting that support our arguments:**
 - Four armed police were on site and did not prevent or end the shooting.
 - The shooter interacted with law enforcement many times: he was the subject of [tips to the FBI](#) and had the police received calls about him at least 17 times--and they were unable to prevent the shooting. Law enforcement clearly cannot be the only tool we use to prevent these shootings.
 - Broward County Superintendent said after the shooting that the mental health support in Broward is “[not sufficient](#).”
- **How does this relate to the Federal School Discipline Guidance Package?**
 - The guidance focused on internal school climate and ongoing school discipline practices, rather than acute threats posed by intruders - it does not prevent school staff working fairly to address issues with any student as they come up.
 - The guidance names the obligations schools have under current civil rights law to conduct school discipline in non-discriminatory ways - It did not impose any new requirements and does not represent any new laws that are up for debate.
 - While questions concerning the prevention of mass shootings in schools are extremely important, preventing racial discrimination in school discipline is equally critical, which is why the Department of Education must prevent discrimination in the application of school discipline even though they have rescinded the guidance.
 - The package provides resources for how to integrate positive school discipline practices that get to the root of the problem when school staff are concerned about a student, rather than pushing students out of school who then receive no support.

- **How does this relate to calls for more gun control?**
 - Our campaign supports the demands of [You Can't Build Peace with a Piece](#), a statement released by young people of color impacted by gun violence who state that a gun in anyone's hands will not solve our problems.
 - Gun control without addressing police violence (both in schools and in communities) will fall short of protecting people of color from gun violence.
 - Opponents of gun control are now purposefully trying to shift the focus away from the issue of guns, including some that are inappropriately blaming efforts to improve school discipline policies for the Parkland shooting. The shooter was expelled from school, one of the harshest discipline responses available to schools, and it did not stop him from acting out violently.

Resources:

- [Call for Action to Prevent Gun Violence in the United States of America](#)
- <http://time.com/5186040/sherrilyn-ifill-black-children-classroom/>
- <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/3/2/17064240/arming-teachers-black-latino-students-danger-school-discipline>
- <https://theintercept.com/2018/02/28/parkland-florida-school-shootings-arming-teachers/>