



‘Student Safety Is Our Paramount Concern,’ Afterschool Leader Says in Urging Education Department Not to Allow School Districts to Use Funds Intended for Student Services to Arm Teachers

Statement of Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance

“At the Afterschool Alliance, we recognize the urgent imperative to keep students safe, in their schools as well as communities, and support responsible measures that will do so. Like so many others, we have been heartbroken at the school shootings that are occurring with horrifying frequency in our country. One reason we advocate so fiercely for more afterschool and summer learning programs is their track record of keeping students safe during the sometimes-perilous afterschool hours by giving them alternatives to risky behaviors, gang activity and crime; engaging them in their schools and communities; and helping support their social-emotional development.

We believe a bipartisan majority in Congress acted wisely by appropriating badly needed funds to support student learning and provide mental health care, violence prevention activities, social emotional learning programs and other essential services through the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants program. We are convinced those funds are best used for that purpose and should not be diverted to allow for the purchase of guns to arm teachers, which is not an evidence-based strategy but is a move that would carry real and considerable risk.

Vast experience has taught the afterschool community that effective solutions lie in giving all children and youth homework help, opportunities for team-based learning, anti-bullying counseling, exposure to mentors, college and career counseling, and other essential supports. The Afterschool Alliance signed on to the Title IV-A Coalition statement expressing dismay at the U.S. Department of Education’s proposal to take funds intended to provide these services and instead use them to purchase guns to arm teachers, because student safety is our paramount concern. We believe what the Department is considering allowing school districts to do would put students at risk, rather than making them safer.”

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.