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Council of the Great City Schools

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Big-City Schools Coalition Calls for Ban on Assault Weapons

Proposed Comprehensive Legislation Includes Universal Background Checks, Resources for School Safety and Mental Health, and Data Reforms

Arming Teachers Opposed

WASHINGTON, March 12 --The Council of the Great City Schools, the nation's primary coalition of large urban public school systems, called today for new federal legislation that would ban assault weapons, require universal background checks on the purchase of all other firearms, provide substantial funding for school safety measures, support more mental health and counseling services in schools, and reform the collection of data on gun use.

“Our nation’s urban schools have heard the cries of our students for tougher gun legislation and their pleas for stronger mental health support,” said Darienne Driver, superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools and chair of the 70-member Council. “Today we honor those voices and respond to their call for action.”

The five-part comprehensive proposal begins by calling for a ban on the sale, purchase, possession, and use of assault-style weapons and large-capacity ammunition cartridges, except those needed by the military and law enforcement. The proposal would also include universal background checks on individuals purchasing other types of firearms and would close the “gun-show loophole.”

The second part of the proposal would authorize up to \$1 billion in grants to states and local school systems to support better coordination between law-enforcement and school officials, strengthen crisis response systems, provide safety training for teachers and other school personnel, modify school facilities to better secure access to buildings, purchase additional security hardware, and support school security staff.

The third part of the proposal would authorize another \$1 billion to strengthen and expand school-based and other mental-health services, counseling, positive behavior programs,

and social-emotional supports for children. The proposed measure would continue to fund grants under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to eligible entities.

The fourth portion of the proposal would expand Gun-Free School Zones, with appropriate exceptions, in order to safeguard students walking to and from and within their schools.

Finally, the proposed measure requires that all firearm-related injuries and deaths be reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation by state and local law-enforcement agencies. Other provisions include the strengthening of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System and dropping constraints on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The organization also expressed strong opposition to arming teachers, a strategy that could escalate violence and bloodshed in schools instead of protecting students.

“Schools have an important role to play in the public debate about mass shootings—tragedies that have taken place in too many of our schools over the last two decades,” said Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council. “This proposal is designed to address the complex nature of school shootings, and to lay out a series of clear, meaningful steps that we can take, as a country, to ensure the safety of our students and teachers.”

The Council has drafted specifications for the proposed legislation.

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