



Statement by Ray Hart, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools
On Gun Violence

The Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of 78 of the nation's largest urban school districts, laments the recent rash of gun violence in our communities and on our campuses. Three shootings over the past three days in Denver, Colorado, and Dallas and Arlington, Texas, should be an impetus for shared outrage and collective action—a time to put aside politics and ideology and support school leaders as they rethink school safety protocols and mobilize resources in response to these attacks.

In a nation where citizens have easy access to firearms, we stand behind our urban school leaders and school board members who must make difficult choices to ensure the safety and security of their students and staff. We urge them, and other leaders of our communities, to come together and explore all options to keep our students and staff healthy and safe including, but not limited to, increasing social services and mental health supports and increasing the presence of officers in schools when needed. As urban educators, we recognize that students and communities of color are often disproportionately targeted and criminalized by ill-conceived school discipline and law enforcement measures. It is therefore critical that officers have training in conflict resolution, de-escalation, restorative practices, and other skills to ensure their interactions with youth are appropriate and that they are equipped to serve students in schools.

We also recognize that gun violence does not start or stop at our schoolhouse doors—students, staff, and families are at risk on their commute to school, in parking lots and playgrounds, and throughout our communities. Gun violence in our schools is a reflection of gun violence in our communities and throughout our nation.

Therefore, we call on our elected officials to address the need for gun safety nationwide. In 2018, the Council's Board of Directors passed a [resolution](#) demanding effective and comprehensive action from the federal government to protect school children. The resolution called for the president of the United States to charge all agencies of the federal government with the task of reducing the number of gun-related injuries and death in America. We renew this call today.

Five years later, gun violence continues unabated. Division and entrenched ideological discord has not yielded progress and has only served to distract us from our common goal. Focusing on the safety, health, and well-being of our students, staff, and communities is paramount.