

RESOLUTION:

Advocating for School Safety and Gun Violence Prevention Measures

Presented to LWPTSA Council general membership for adoption on April 12, 2018

Whereas, the members of the Lake Washington PTSA Council joins students, families, school professionals, and community members across Washington State in the desire for policy changes that help end the growing problem of violence in schools; and

Whereas, the causes of violence in schools are complex and multifaceted, and so the policy changes to prevent further incidents must address multiple issues as well; and

Whereas, gun violence presents a clear and present danger to the students, parents, educators, paraeducators, administrators, and support staff of the Lake Washington School District; and

Whereas, in the past five years eight school shootings have occurred in Washington State, four of which resulted in injury or death¹, and facilities in districts around Washington State have far too often been the scenes of gun violence and threats of gun violence; and

Whereas, children of color are victims of homicide by firearms at a higher rate than white children in King County² and people of color are more likely to be the victims of wrongful shootings by those in positions of power, making it likely that arming educators would have a disproportionately adverse and lethal impact on students of color³; and

Whereas, approximately 21% of King County adults (340,000 people) reported firearms present in or around their homes. Among these adults, approximately 15% (51,000 people) of firearm owners reported storing them loaded and unlocked⁴; and

Whereas, between 2013 - 2015, 118 youth (age 17 or younger) died by suicide in Washington; 47 of these youth (40%) died from firearms⁵; and

Whereas, adolescents with access to firearms are 2.6 times as likely to die by suicide as adolescents without access to firearms⁶; and

Whereas, gun violence, and threats of gun violence, in schools undermine the sense of security that all students should have in their learning environments; and

Whereas, we believe that every child deserves to learn in an environment that is safe and have the opportunity to grow into a happy and healthy adult; and

Whereas, the National PTA has advocated for a variety of measures to address gun violence, including mental health education, early intervention, prevention and access to school and community-based mental health personnel and services, measures to educate students, educators and community members on firearm safety and violence prevention, as well as laws and regulations in the areas of gun safety and violence prevention.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Lake Washington PTSA Council joins the National PTA⁴ in its demands that Washington State and federal government adopt legislation to accomplish the following policy goals:

- Require universal background checks and a license to purchase a firearm.
- Re-enact a federal ban on the sale and possession of military-style assault weapons.
- Lift any ban on research that studies the causes and effects of gun violence; and

Therefore, be it further resolved that the Lake Washington PTSA Council also supports laws and regulations that would accomplish the following:

- Increase the federal minimum purchase age to 21 for all long-guns (rifles) to match current federal regulations for handguns.
- Support prevention, intervention and community re-entry programs that reduce community and gun violence.
- Require responsible storage of firearms and create criminal liability when a child uses an unsafely stored firearm.
- Increase funding for programs and school staffing that support student mental health, social and emotional learning, and anti-bullying.
- Establish safety programs in schools that do not include arming educators or staff.

Therefore, be it further resolved that the Lake Washington PTSA Council also supports the efforts by the Lake Washington School District to increase safety measures to better protect the District's students, teachers and staff.

Liz Hedreen, LWPTSA Council President

Date: April 12, 2018

Melissa Stone, LWPTSA Council Legislative Chair

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Footnotes

1. <https://everytownresearch.org/school-shootings/#2919>
2. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearms-research/guns-and-death/>
3. According to a November 25, 2013 report from Public Health – Seattle & King County, available at <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/violence-injury-prevention/violenceprevention/~/media/depts/health/violenceinjury-prevention/documents/impact-firearms-children-report.ashx>



4. WA State Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2015
5. WA State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics Death Certificate data, June 2017
6. Annals of Internal Medicine 2014