

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 11, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Mikulski, and Ranking Member Shelby:

We write to urge your support for increased funding for school safety and violence prevention programs throughout the remainder of Fiscal Year 2013 and in Fiscal Year 2014. Our children are our nation's most precious treasure, and despite our challenging budget situation, we must prioritize funding for the critical programs that enhance safety for our students and educators.

Recent tragedies have prompted a national dialogue regarding a variety of proposals aimed at preventing gun violence. We welcome the consideration of proposals that emerge from this dialogue and ask that funding for school safety be made a priority when preparing future appropriations legislation. As the deadline for the continuing resolution approaches and many other difficult decisions remain on the horizon, it is critical that we give priority to the federal programs that promote school safety, violence prevention, and positive school climate.

On January 16, 2013, President Obama released a comprehensive plan outlining proposals to prevent gun violence. As part of this plan, the President takes immediate steps by directing federal agencies to develop model emergency response plans and giving priority to community policing applicants that will use grant funding to support school resource officers. In his proposal, the President also recommends that Congress provide increased federal resources to help school districts make critical investments in school safety.

While recognizing our challenging budget environment, we urge you to provide the highest possible funding level to help school districts hire mental health professionals and school resource officers, purchase school safety equipment, and strengthen school safety plans and strategies to prevent bullying. In response to the President's recommendations, Congress should make available a one-time grant to states that would be awarded on a formula basis and that would help school districts create and implement emergency management plans. Additionally, Congress should increase funding for the key programs that foster effective partnerships between the federal government and school districts, including the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities program, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling program, and the COPS Secure Our Schools program. Going forward, all states and school districts receiving this

funding should be required to maintain comprehensive and up-to-date emergency plans for their schools. Recognizing that no one school district is the same as another, school districts should be given the necessary latitude to develop plans that will address the unique needs facing their schools.

Following the horrific tragedy in Newtown, states and communities across our nation are working to improve violence prevention, safety, and emergency preparedness in their schools, but there is limited federal funding available at this time to support these efforts. In the coming months, Congress will make important decisions regarding funding for the remainder of FY 2013 and will begin its work on the FY 2014 budget and appropriations process. In an effort to prevent future violence in schools, we ask you to support increased funding for these programs.

Sincerely,



Tim Johnson
United States Senator



Max Baucus
United States Senator



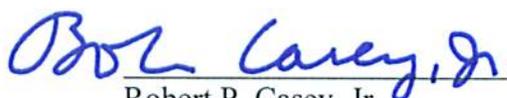
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Senator Al Franken
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator