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Media Contact

Heidi May Wilson, National PTA
hmay@PTA.org, (703) 518-1242

National PTA Advocates for Gun Safety and Mental Health Services to Protect Children

ALEXANDRIA, Va., (Feb. 21, 2018)—National PTA joins students, families, educators, school administrators, community leaders and the nation in grief over the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and all acts of gun violence involving children and youth. This kind of loss is unimaginable, and our country has experienced far too many gun-related tragedies. It is urgent that we work together to find solutions and make meaningful changes to keep our children safe.

“Every child deserves to learn in an environment that is safe and to have the opportunity to grow into a happy and healthy adult,” said Jim Accomando, president of National PTA. “Our top priorities as a nation should be to protect our children, meet the needs of the whole child and ensure every child reaches their full potential. It is critical that solutions are enacted to eliminate gun violence.”

National PTA urges Congress to adopt legislation that would help prevent future tragedies from occurring while preserving the lawful use of firearms for sport and personal protection. National PTA has a strong history of advocating for laws and regulations in the areas of gun safety and violence prevention and supports the following policy recommendations:

- Require universal background checks and a license to purchase a firearm ([Position Statement on Gun Safety and Violence Prevention, 2016](#)).
- Re-enact a federal ban on the sale and possession of military-style assault weapons ([Position Statement on Firearms, 1990](#)).
- Lift any ban on research that studies the causes and effects of gun violence ([Resolution on the Sale, Resale and Destruction of Firearms, 2017](#)).

National PTA also advocates for preventative measures to educate students, educators and community members on firearm safety and violence prevention, such as:

- Inclusion of violence prevention and intervention strategies in public schools and community programs and services ([Resolution on Violence Prevention, 1995](#)).
- Promotion of public education campaigns to alert parents and community members to the devastating effects of firearm-related violence ([Resolution on Firearm Safety and Awareness, 1996](#)).

At the same time, National PTA urges federal, state and local policymakers to prioritize mental health education, early intervention, prevention and access to school and community-based mental health personnel and services, so that all children can reach their fullest potential ([Position Statement on Early Identification and Interventions for Children with Mental Health Needs, 2017](#)). National PTA has long been committed to providing improved mental health programs and services to children, youth and their families and believes that all children and youth have the right to mental health treatment. National PTA recommends:

- Federal, state and local policies prioritize outreach and education—including professional development for all school-based employees—in schools and communities regarding childhood mental health.

- Resources are specifically provided to build mental and behavioral health system capacity within schools and communities to ensure students can receive a proactive continuum of behavioral and mental health services.
- States and school districts provide the necessary resources to ensure adequate ratios of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers and school nurses, who are the most qualified professionals to provide school-based mental health services.

“Resolutions and position statements inform PTA's advocacy efforts on behalf of kids and schools,” added Nathan R. Monell, CAE, National PTA executive director. “National PTA urges our members and all child advocates to reach out to their members of Congress and state and local policymakers to ensure schools and communities have the resources and capacity to provide a safer and healthier environment for all students.”

About National PTA

National PTA® comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth. For more information, visit [PTA.org](https://www.pta.org).