



"Ensuring ALL children have access to opportunity through quality public schools."

Dear Friends and Members of the Franklin Foundation Community;

An unfortunate truth – another day, another school shooting. Regardless of the reasons, the impetus behind these shootings, they have become an unfair part of the reality for so many children and teens who simply show up to school every day expecting and desiring to get a quality education that will give them the skills they need to become productive adults.

Ours is a nation stuck in react mode. I'd like to offer some perspective. The incident in Maryland represents the 17th school shooting incident in 2018, just 3 months into the new year. It is important to note, this is the 188th gun-related incident on school grounds since 1990. This serious issue demands our focus and attention to properly address the systemic failures that lead to these tragedies, not reactionary actions. As an organization, we are not against guns. The freedom of our society is based on a long history of Americans having a right to defend themselves. However, as an organization fighting to ensure all children have access to high quality public schools, we simply cannot support proposals that arm educators over ensuring skilled law enforcement and the appropriate technologies and processes are put into place to keep students safe.

While tragic, the outcome of the incident at Great Mills was a demonstration that a trained and skilled law enforcement professional is the best way to protect students should an incident occur. It further proves the need for a focus on implementing the tools and technologies necessary to prevent an incident in the first place. Had the school been filled with armed teachers, as many have suggested, the outcome is likely to have been different. Imagine how complex the situation would have become with multiple shooters in the building. We must take a moment of pause and think through this issue this time. No sound-bites from government leaders saying, "now's not the time", no rallying cries from people with other intentions calling for a ban on all guns. We need a balanced solution that offers total security, so our students can focus on learning when they attend school every day.

I am an avid sportsman and owner of several weapons for sport. Trained by an NRA-certified trainer, I believe strongly in the importance of the 2nd Amendment. I'm also a father of four, with a 17-year-old junior daughter and 5-year-old kindergartner in public schools. Like every parent, I lose sleep over the idea that I could lose one of my school-age children tomorrow because someone else decided to make it so. But as a father, one of the most important lessons I teach my children is the power of strategy over reaction. I teach them the importance of taking time to pause, assess, and do the right thing instead of the easy thing or the first thing that comes to mind.





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Fact is, everyone has a job to do when it comes to our schools. Parents have a job to encourage, students a job to learn, administrators a job to be accountable, and teachers have a job to teach. Mistakes happen when people are expected to do other jobs. Ensuring schools have the tools and technology to protect children will have a greater impact than anything else we can do. Students shouldn't have to worry about getting shot at school. An increase in the number of guns on a school campus will logically increase the probability of a student getting shot, either by a bad actor or by accident; something any high school math student can tell you. Our government has a job to do as well - to ensure the safety of our students in the most a-political and effective way possible. As a citizen, I expect everyone to do their jobs. I encourage everyone to find a better solution to this 165-year-old issue of gun violence in public schools.

On March 24th, our nation's next generation of leaders will make their voices heard from around the country. Government's job will be to listen. Parent's job will be to nurture without inserting their own rhetoric or beliefs. Our public-school boards and administrator's job will be to borrow ideas and strategize how they can keep these students safe. Again, everyone needs to do their jobs. Everyone needs to do their jobs.

With love, wishing safety and security for all,

Endre Jarraux Walls
Dad to 4 Children
Chief Executive Officer & Board Member
The Franklin Foundation for Innovation

