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November 5, 2019

Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the NEA who teach, nurture, and support students in 14,000 communities across America, we are writing to share our serious concerns about the Luke and Alex School Safety Act of 2019 (S. 2779). We appreciate the opportunity during the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's markup of the bill to offer these concerns for the record.

While the legislation intends to compile best practices for school safety, history has shown us that when these practices are not properly implemented, the possibility exists for unintended and potentially harmful consequences, such as:

- Over-policing of schools and exacerbating racial profiling of students of color;
- Increasing the practices that feed into the school-to-prison pipeline; and
- "Hardening" schools to the degree that they become more like de facto prisons and less like places of learning and discovery.

Preparedness and incident response are important issues, but a myopic focus on them keeps us from getting to the heart of the problem: our need for comprehensive gun-violence prevention laws.

Educators also want to focus on expanding mental health services in schools, providing additional school-based health centers, providing more funding for educators' professional development in bullying prevention and other areas, and having the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention research gun violence as a public health issue.

Gun violence destabilizes us all. No one—least of all children—should have to endure it. We must do everything we can to keep students safe while also providing them with crucial support. Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns about the Luke and Alex School Safety Act.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association