

Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota statement on school shootings

For more information, contact:

[Chris Williams](#)

651-292-4816 (work)

651-247-5539 (cell)

ST. PAUL, Minn. Feb. 20, 2018 – The tragic shooting deaths of 17 students and educators at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, have prompted lawmakers and commentators to recycle several proposals for countering the now familiar mass killing of children and educators in American schools. Education Minnesota President Denise Specht released the following statement Tuesday in response.

Educator stress

“Every educator in America has looked in the mirror, considered their own families and made a private decision about whether they would sacrifice their own lives to save their students from a mass murderer,” Specht said. “We live with that decision, and the worry that our school might be next, every single day. On top of everything else, is it surprising educators are stressed out? Our nation must take steps to reduce the chances of another school shooting.”

Arming teachers

“Why must we assume that attempts to slaughter students are inevitable? Because that’s the implicit statement behind all these ‘fight back’ ideas,” Specht said. “Let’s meet the mental health needs of students, reduce access to weapons of mass murder and build secure schools instead. We don’t need more guns in schools. We need fewer gunmen in schools.”

“A solution that involves selling more guns might appeal to some people, but educators know arming all the teachers is a terrible idea,” Specht said. “Schools aren’t secure. Kindergarteners get into everything because they are curious. High school students can often overpower their teachers. Finally, we don’t want law enforcement officers on the scene of a real, chaotic incident to accidentally shoot an armed teacher.”

Expanding the presence of school resource officers

“The leaders suggesting an armed enforcement officer in every school building are ignoring what’s happening every day in Minnesota schools,” Specht said. “Instead of police officers, how about a counselor, nurse or social worker in every school? How about smaller class sizes so teachers can build relationships with each student? How about making mental health care for young people more accessible? How about physical education, art and languages for everyone? Those are things our students and educators could use every day.”

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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