



July 21, 2019

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rosen,

The Nevada Association of School Psychologists (NVASP) is dedicated to ensuring all students are safe and successful in schools. It is our hope that when discussions occur surrounding school safety, it is remembered that the physical safety of our children is only one piece of school safety. While even one life lost to violent crime is too many, consider the toll of unmet mental health needs across the country. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people. One in five children and youth will experience a mental health disorder. Approximately 80% of students who need mental health care do not receive it. We understand that physical safety alone is not sufficient, and we have an obligation to ensure students are also psychologically safe.

NVASP has worked closely with the Nevada legislature during the 2019 session to ensure the mental health of our students is a priority across the state. Our Director of Government and Professional Relations, Katherine Dockweiler, was a voice at the table.

On March 19, 2018 then Governor Sandoval established the Nevada Statewide School Safety Task Force. The Task Force included 26 individuals representing state legislators, superintendents, school board members, principals, teachers, mental health providers, healthcare professionals, law enforcement, parents, and students. Two workgroups were created to tackle the concerns of school safety: Physical Infrastructure Workgroup and Student Well Being Workgroup. These groups worked diligently to provide recommendations that not only addressed the physical safety of our students, but also their mental health and psychological safety.

The work of this task force resulted in the creation and eventual passing of Senate Bill 89. SB 89 recognizes the importance of children's **physical safety** by prescribing that schools provide safe and respectful learning environments free of bullying and cyber-bullying. A SafeVoice program will enable any person to report dangerous, violent, or unlawful activity in schools, and the jurisdiction of school police officers is to be extended to all school property, buildings, and facilities within the school districts. Additionally, schools must develop plans for responding to crises, emergencies, and suicides, and drills should occur monthly to instruct pupils in appropriate procedures in the event of a lockdown, fire, or other emergency.

SB 89 also addresses the **social-emotional and mental health needs** of our students by requiring the State Board of Education to develop nonbinding recommendations for ratios of pupils to specialized instructional support personnel (including school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses) and develop a 15-year strategic plan to achieve the ratios in each district. A statewide framework shall be created for providing and coordinating integrated student supports for pupils enrolled in public schools and the families of such pupils

including 1) engaging the parents and guardians, 2) assessing the social, emotional, and academic development of pupils, and 3) screening, intervening, and monitoring the social, emotional, and academic progress of pupils. Additionally, schools will establish a plan to provide for the restorative discipline of pupils.

NVASP supports the recommendations provided through A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, a joint statement issued through a collaboration between the American School Counselor Association, National Association of School Psychologists, School Social Work Association of America, National Association of School Resource Officers, National Association of Elementary School Principals, and National Association of Secondary School Principals. This framework recognizes that school safety and positive school climate are not achieved by singular actions, but rather by comprehensive and collaborative efforts. The following best practices are outlined in the framework:

- 1) Integrate services through collaboration
- 2) Implement multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)
- 3) Improve access to school-based mental health supports
- 4) Integrate school safety and crisis/emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery
- 5) Balance physical and psychological safety
- 6) Employ effective, positive school discipline
- 7) Allow for the consideration of context, understanding there is no one-size fits-all approach to creating safe and successful schools
- 8) Acknowledge that sustainable and effective improvement takes patience and commitment

We appreciate and applaud all efforts to keep our children safe in school. NVASP is committed to our vision that all students in Nevada have equal access to quality learning, behavior, and mental health supports in order to feel physically and psychologically safe and allow them to gain the skills needed to thrive in school, home, and life.

Please consider the Nevada Association of School Psychologists a resource in further discussions regarding school safety.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Patton, Ed.S., NCSP
President-Elect
Nevada Association of School Psychologists
stephanie.patton.nvasp@gmail.com