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The NAME Statement on DeVos's government-funded firearms for schools proposal

In this back-to-school season, it would be a no-brainer for the National Association for Multicultural Education to support U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos if she proposed using federal grant money for a nationwide universal [preschool](#) or to [boost teachers' salary](#) or to ensure an inclusive [multicultural curriculum](#) in schools nationwide. But in no way could NAME back any effort by Secretary DeVos to use [federal school enrichment funding to buy guns for schools](#) with the foolish and potentially fatal expectation that such government provided firearms would keep students, teachers, and school employees safe from mass shootings.

Secretary DeVos should remember (because NAME will never forget) that in the Feb. 14, 2018, mass shooting at [Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School](#) in Parkland, Fla., that [an armed resource officer on the campus](#) never went into the school as a gunman opened fire, killing 17 students and staff members. Fear-fed inaction is just one likely outcome when an armed assailant enters a school posing such a devastating threat to students and staff. In the Parkland tragedy, the National Rifle Association's mantra of a so-called "good guy with a gun" was a highly trained officer. Arming educators could result in accidental shootings at schools or unintended student victims if an armed intruder were to enter a school building.

The Every Student Succeeds Act federal grant program, which Congress created in 2015, makes \$1.1 billion available for schools with few restrictions. Inquiries on the use of the funds from Texas and Oklahoma prompted Secretary DeVos to misguidedly consider whether the money could be used to buy guns for schools. She should already know that Congress after the Parkland shooting allocated \$50 million a year for a school safety program but specifically prevents the money from being used to train or provide school staff with firearms.

NAME and other equity and social justice organizations know that classroom teachers already are asked to do a lot to educate America's children. Keeping up with school-issued firearms for safety purposes should never be added to the list of educators' overwhelming responsibilities.

NAME encourages Secretary DeVos to devote the vast resources of the U.S. Department of Education instead to support Parkland high school and other students in their activist efforts to make schools safer with meaningful gun control laws. Before classes ended with summer vacation, thousands of students after the Parkland shooting [walked out](#) of schools nationwide to demand stricter gun control laws. It was an unprecedented show of political solidarity centered on making schools safer.

More demonstrations like that need to occur now that school doors are opening for the 2018-2019 school year. Student-led efforts for meaningful gun control laws — not Department of Education supplied firearms — provide the best hope for safer schools and communities nationwide. NAME supports students, families, teachers, and all school employees in their push for safe schools. Social justice and educational equity through multicultural education can only be fostered in environments where students and teachers feel safe.