



**National School Boards Association Statement on the Final Report of the Federal Commission on
School Safety**
December 18, 2018

Statement by Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director and CEO

School boards have worked diligently and consistently for many years to enhance security, and they continue to take action to protect students, teachers, administrators and visitors. They are engaged in a constant effort to create safe environments, and to ensure that public schools are sanctuaries for learning and teaching. Schools have produced safe environments for tens of millions of students, and they are among the safest places for children.

The National School Boards Association is pleased that several of our recommendations are included in the [Final Report of the Federal Commission on School Safety](#) issued today. Our recommendations include allowing local school districts to customize approaches that best fit their communities, providing more support for School Resource Officers, and improving school-based mental health and counseling for our youth. We agree with the Commission's recommendations to foster collaboration among government organizations. Increasing and facilitating information-sharing can bolster productive intervention before a crisis occurs.

Addressing student and school safety requires a comprehensive approach with sustained resources for locally-determined programs. School districts have consistently made investments in infrastructure to secure buildings by installing safeguards like access control and visitor management systems, and both interior and exterior surveillance cameras. Schools conduct crisis preparedness drills and work closely with local law enforcement agencies. Some schools employ a school resource officer -- a sworn police officer who works on school property. Continuing this important work by school districts requires uninterrupted funding and flexibility so that the funds allocated by local school leaders meet the needs in their school district.

Relevant to the discipline guidance specified in this report, schools implement practices commensurate to federal statutes for school safety and support those practices prohibiting the use of race and ethnicity in student discipline. As courts have repeatedly held, student discipline is first and foremost an educational matter for which local educational leaders are ultimately responsible. We agree that a federal one-size-fits-all approach is not the optimal way to address pedagogical concerns involving student conduct. We also believe that taking race into account in assessing how discipline is meted out and appreciating how children of color might be affected by certain discipline policies is consistent with our board approved policy, with available data regarding disparities in discipline and with current law.

As the conversation continues about additional measures to enhance school safety, the federal government could play a critical role. Additional federal funds should be allocated to support school resource officers, to expand mental health services and school counseling, and to enhance school building design and construction initiatives.

School board members have actively fostered and engaged in conversations with their communities and fellow government officials at the local, state and federal levels. As guardians of our future generations, school boards are tirelessly working to address a range of complex issues that are essential to enhancing security, so students can learn in a safe environment and teachers can teach without fear.