December 15, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
The U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

We write to urge you to take commonsense action to help prevent the gun violence we see unfolding in our schools. Recently, four students were shot to death at Oxford High School in Michigan, and another seven people were injured—including one educator. This shooting, like far too many others, was perpetrated with a firearm from the home, underlining the imperative that all gun owners – especially those around children – securely store their firearms. To prevent future tragedies, your Department should take bold action to raise awareness about secure gun storage by informing parents and school districts of its importance.

The shooting in Michigan comes amidst an historic surge in gun violence on school grounds. Between August 1 and October 31 this year, there have been 89 instances of gunfire on school grounds, killing 15 and wounding 63—the highest number of incidents and people shot in a three-month period since data began being collected in 2013.¹ While the federal government has taken some steps to address these horrifying incidents, we have ignored a critical intervention to address the common element in the overwhelming number of these tragedies: easy access to guns in the home. The incident at Oxford High School adds to the overwhelming evidence that shows access to guns in the home is a critical intervention point. For example, the Department of Homeland Security’s National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) studied targeted school violence from 2008 through 2017 and found that 76 percent of school shooters used a firearm they took from a parent or close relative’s home.² In nearly half of these shootings, the firearm was easily accessible or was not stored securely.

The Biden administration supports bold action to address gun violence, and we need that leadership again to keep our schools safe. Keeping guns away from kids should be neither partisan nor controversial. An estimated 54 percent of gun owners do not lock all of their guns securely, and at least 5.4 million children in 2021 live in a home with at least one unlocked and loaded firearm—up from 4.6 million in 2015.³ We have seen many school districts take action to provide information on secure storage to their families, but far too many have not. We urge you to direct the Department of Education to develop a strategy to encourage school districts to send parents secure firearm storage information and raise awareness about the importance of secure gun storage.

storage in keeping schools safe. Your Department can take action to give parents information about effective secure storage methods and provide guidance to schools about best practices on the methods to reach parents. These commonsense solutions cannot wait.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Alex Padilla  
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Elizabeth Warren  
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Jerrold Nadler  
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Brenda L. Lawrence  
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Pramila Jayapal  
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Gwen Moore  
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Haley Stevens  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress