



Great Public Schools
for Every Student

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January 23, 2013

Senator Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the more than three million members of the National Education Association – dedicated educators who serve and protect millions of children every day – we would like to offer our support for your legislation to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. We thank you for your continued leadership on this most urgent issue.

From Paducah, Kentucky in 1997 to Newtown just last month, every member of the National Education Association grieves when students and educators are victims of horrific violence. We are a family, so we grieve for the parents who have lost children, and we grieve for the families of the educators who time and time again put themselves between bullets and their students. Now, more than ever, we stand ready to speak out and mobilize to protect our students and communities from further pain and needless violence.

NEA supports a multi-pronged approach to gun violence prevention. Your proposal to ban assault weapons and high capacity clips is an essential piece of this approach. Assault weapons and high-capacity magazines should be used by soldiers and police officers.

Since 1979, when data were first collected, guns have taken the lives of nearly 120,000 American children and teenagers. While not all of these deaths could have been prevented by an assault weapons ban, it is clear that such a ban, when in effect, did make a real difference. According to a [study published by the Brady Center](#) in 2004, the federal assault weapons ban reduced the incidence of assault weapons used in crimes. In the five-year period (1990-1994) before enactment of the ban, assault weapons named in the Act constituted 4.82% of the gun crimes traced by ATF nationwide. In the post-ban period after 1995, these assault weapons made up only 1.61% of the guns ATF has traced to crime incidences – a drop of 66% from the pre-ban rate.

Your proposals are very much in line with the views of NEA members. A [new NEA member poll](#) indicates overwhelming support for stronger gun violence prevention laws, including background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazine clips.

Addressing gun violence also requires a focus on bullying prevention and much greater access to mental health services, so educators and families can identify problems and intervene before it is too late. We hope Congress will look at each of these issues in devising a comprehensive strategy.

Again, we thank you for your leadership on this important issue and look forward to working with you to prevent more senseless tragedies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kusler".

Mary Kusler
Director of Government Relations