



Federal Commission on School Safety public listening session

June 6, 2018

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, Room SVC-214

U.S. Department of Education - LBJ Auditorium

Good Morning.

I'm Earl Franks, Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), an organization that provides advocacy and support to our nation's elementary and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children.

We sincerely appreciate the opportunity to make comments related to school safety, which I believe we can all agree, is of the utmost concern for our country and especially those of us in education. As a former teacher and school principal, I have always said that student safety is the top priority because a student cannot learn if they do not feel safe. Also, ask any parent and they will tell you that their children's safety is the most important factor when they send them off to school every day.

To that end, since the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, NAESP has pushed for a nonpartisan, comprehensive approach to improving school safety and mental health services in schools. We realize that school safety and student well-being issues are complex, but we believe that the nation must find research-based policy solutions that lead to meaningful change. And, I firmly believe that these solutions must begin with those involved in education on a daily basis.

Our request and desire is transparent and simple: leveraging work that has been done by many organizations, education related and otherwise, we would hope that this commission would collaborate with us to identify and elevate strategies, policy recommendations, and identify solutions to improve school safety and access to mental health in schools. Additionally, this collaborative process can unite all groups to support policy development and implementation, ensure a comprehensive approach, and improve alignment of federal, state, and local policies.

NAESP, like many organizations speaking today, has developed resources and tools to advance work around school safety. But it is our sincere hope that through genuine collaboration, we can improve awareness of each other's work, break down silos, and work collectively to advance a shared mission that meaningfully moves the needle on school safety.

Specifically, we want to collaborate to address key questions:

1. What should a comprehensive, school-wide approach to improving school safety and mental health services look like?
2. What solutions best support effective design and implementation of programs that facilitate a multi-tiered system of supports?
3. How can the federal government, states, and districts align efforts to support the development and implementation of research-based, comprehensive school safety plans?
4. What are best-practices and strategies to support blending state and federal funding streams in education and mental health services?

Finally, our hope is for this commission, the United States Department of Education, and the Administration, to partner with us on actionable next steps that will help us collectively create and support policy development and implementation while ensuring a comprehensive approach through the alignment of federal, state, and local policies.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.