

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2013

Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Chuck Grassley
Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators:

As the Senate continues its consideration and hopeful advance of gun violence legislation, it is imperative to look at all options available to combat gun violence in our schools and our communities.

An over-reliance on traditional models used to address youth violence, such as armed security in schools to combat gun violence, addresses only one aspect of the problem we face. Too many lives hang in the balance and relying on enforcement alone means that our youth will continue to enter the criminal justice system, have mental health needs unmet, and countless families will continue to be torn apart by senseless tragedies. There are other options that have proven to not only stop violence before it happens, but help our youth realize their full potential in life.

In passing the Schiff-Cardenas Crime Prevention Act of 2000, the state of California has taken the lead in addressing juvenile justice and violence on our campuses by ensuring a 1:1 funding ratio of law enforcement to juvenile justice and mental health services in Community-Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS) programs. Since the passage of this landmark legislation, California has maintained a dedicated funding source for counties to promote and create juvenile programs and provide the necessary mental health services to our youth. This approach has proven effective in curbing crime among at-risk and young offenders. It has expanded the available funds towards traditional law enforcement activities while creating a mechanism to address the issue of youth violence before our children enter the justice system.

Putting more armed guards in schools should not be the only solution. Our children deserve more. Our schools should remain a place of learning and exploration. By providing the adequate funding for counselors and mental health services, staff will be able to identify at-risk students and help them get the aid they need, before they result to violence.

We request that any additional funding dedicated towards police, guards and school resource officers be matched equally by funding for mental health and early intervention programs for our youth. The 1:1 ratio in California has greatly reduced school violence and has helped steer our youth in a better direction. This funding not only protects our children, it invests in them so that they too can invest in our communities.

If you have any further questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us or our staff.

Sincerely,


TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress


ADAM SCHIFF
Member of Congress