

# WISCONSIN PUBLIC EDUCATION NETWORK RK

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## Wisconsin Parents to Lawmakers: Listen to Students, School Leaders on School Safety.

*Wisconsin parents call for long-term solutions as legislators begin talks on school safety.*

Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. March 13, 2018: With students around the state planning to participate in walkouts for gun reform on Wednesday, parents across Wisconsin are calling for comprehensive support for safe schools. Responding to news that lawmakers may put forward a School Safety package of one-time aid this week, parents and education supporters are sharing concerns that efforts won't go far enough.

“Our children are literally taking to the street, demanding we do more to protect them,” said **Heather DuBois Bourenane**, parent of two Sun Prairie students and director of Wisconsin Public Education Network. “They’ve got clear and specific demands for reforms that have been proven to work. And they’re not asking for a pat on the head with election-year promises or token one-time aid. They deserve respect that comes in the form of comprehensive solutions. We owe to them to make it happen.”

“For too long, our politicians have listened to lobbyists and special interests who want to control policy. The education community has made clear what our schools need to thrive, and now our students are demanding even more. Wisconsin has spoken clearly, and we want some proof that lawmakers are really listening.”

**Carol Lenz** of Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education and the Fox Cities Gun Violence Prevention team agrees: “Although gun violence is a complicated issue, the common goal is to save lives. We all want our children to live in communities where they feel safe in their schools, in movie theaters or when playing in our parks. The most important policy change that needs to occur is the passage of comprehensive and universal background checks. [Recent polling](#) tells us that eighty-one percent of Wisconsin citizens agree. Action is needed now.”

**Anna Moffit**, Madison School Board member and MMSD parent, wants lawmakers to look at the big picture and let research drive new policy, as opposed to short-sighted and insufficient solutions driven by fear. “[Brain research shows](#) that when individuals are impacted by emotion, like fear or anger, it actually simplifies their thinking. For complex issues like gun violence, however, simple solutions will not address the underlying causes,” Moffit says. “Unfortunately, most of this conversation so far has focused on what I believe to be reactive measures that come from a place of fear. Too much of the discussion has focused on putting more armed police or guards in schools, adding metal detectors, bringing back random checks or arming teachers. While measures such as these may create some superficial feelings of safety, in the end they would produce more harm than good for our students and staff.”

For many parents, efforts to address building security and procedures don't go far enough. **Ryan Clancy**, a Milwaukee Public Schools parent, small business owner and former Milwaukee Public Schools teacher, wants lawmakers to listen to the central demand of students concerned about

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gun violence: “More guns, lockdown drills and fear will not keep our schools safe. Listening to the students as they demand gun control will.”

**Nan Brien**, GRUMPS (GRandparents United for Madison Public Schools), agrees: “As a grandmother of three public schools graduates and two current K-12 students, I know students, our young leaders, are asking for legislation to counteract gun violence and to, affirmatively, promote gun safety.”

Brien calls on lawmakers to listen to local students: “Please take action now to pass the Madison High School Student Platform. The time for meaningful legislative action is NOW! And additional financial resources to improve school security (not arm teachers) would be helpful.

Madison high school students are calling for a five-point reform focused squarely on gun control:

- 1 Universal background checks, holding the state responsible for enforcement.
- 2 Ban bump stocks
- 3 Limit magazine capacity
- 4 Raise the minimum age to purchase an assault rifle or handgun to age 21
- 5 Make education and training more accessible

The Council for Great City Schools’ recommendations go even further, adding a call for a ban on assault weapons to their [five point proposal](#) which includes Universal Background Checks, resources for school safety and mental health, and data reforms - while opposing the idea of arming teachers.

Meanwhile, Parents for Public Schools of Milwaukee “applauds the legislature for being willing to take some action in the shadow of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy it is not enough to offer a one time pot of funds aimed at security.” PPS-Milwaukee President **Jenni Hofschulte** adds that “It is a false flag to simply call for 'more security' or more guns in our schools.”

PPS-MKE stands with the [Recommendations for Preventing Gun Violence](#) from the Prevention Institute.

## **Recommendations for Preventing Gun Violence:**

1. **Gun safety: *Establish a culture of gun safety.*** As the nation on earth with the most guns, we must make sure people are protected. As a starting point, let's insist on mandatory training and licensing along with safe-and secure-gun storage. This training should not be a one-time affair. Gun owners should be required to regularly refresh their training and renew their permits, with requirements at least as stringent as those governing renewal of your driver's license.
2. **Mental health treatment: *Ensure accessible, high quality, culturally competent and widely accessed mental health treatment in the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.*** While gun ownership has been rising, mental health services across the country have been slashed. We must face this challenge head on, reduce the stigma associated with mental health needs, and support our children, friends, family members and neighbors in seeking- and obtaining-high-quality treatment.

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3. **Trauma reduction:** *Reduce children's exposure to violence and address the impact of trauma by implementing recommendations from the Attorney General's National [Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence](#).* From the report: "Our children are experiencing and witnessing violence on an alarming scale...The good news is that we know what works to address children's exposure to violence."
4. **Sensible gun laws:** *Ban high capacity magazines, expand the 24 hour gun background check to make it universal, and reinstitute the assault weapons ban immediately.* We must insist that assault weapons have no place beyond the battlefield-not in our schools, not in our movie theaters, not in our places of worship, not in our streets and communities.
5. **Comprehensive solutions:** *Charge the Department of Justice; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration; and the Department of Education to identify solutions in 90 days.* With input from young people, community members, the faith community and others, these agencies should jointly identify the root causes of this country's more than 16,000 homicides a year and develop a set of recommendations to address them. The next step will be to implement these recommendations with policies, legislation and actions.
6. **Safe communities:** *Support citywide planning and implementation of comprehensive violence prevention plans that include prevention, intervention, enforcement, rehabilitation and reentry.* A growing research base demonstrates that it is possible to prevent shootings, killings and violence in the long term. Yet our communities lack the resources to do what is needed. Passage of the [Youth Promise Act](#) would help make our communities safer. We must commit to helping communities identify and implement solutions.
7. **Public health solutions:** *Recognize gun violence as a critical and preventable public health problem. Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the country.* Yet, unlike other preventable causes of death, we haven't mustered the political will to address it. We should establish a National Institute of Violence Prevention at NIH to research root causes and community solutions. We should fund the CDC to develop its infrastructure so it can track, assess and develop strategies to prevent gun violence, just as we do with tainted spinach and influenza.
8. **Unshackle the CDC:** *Restore the CDC's freedom to study this issue and science-based guidance.* The CDC, the nation's public health agency, is now restricted from making recommendations on sensible ways to reduce gun violence. This must change.

This specificity and demand for comprehensive reform echoes what we have been hearing from students, parents, educators, schools leaders and the [Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Evers](#). A key part of this plan is to restore flexibility in school safety spending by restoring a revenue limit exemption that was cut from schools' budget in 2011, a component that many school leaders say is a necessary start but isn't enough. In her statement for the Council of Great City Schools, Dr. Darienne Driver, Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools says "Our nation's urban schools have heard the cries of our students for tougher gun legislation and their pleas for stronger mental health support. Today we honor those voices and respond to their call for action."

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From parents to superintendents, students to law enforcement leaders, Wisconsin Public Education Network partners statewide call on lawmakers to heed the voices of those who know best what our children need to thrive and our schools need to be safe.

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