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## California Association of Independent Schools Statement on Gun Violence and School Safety

As the Board of Directors of the California Association of Independent Schools, we join our Executive Director and the undersigned colleagues from our member schools — as well as other independent, religious, and proprietary schools throughout California — in anguish over the February 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida. We extend our deepest sympathy to the families of the victims of this and every school shooting, and we stand in unwavering support of the survivors.

We also stand in full solidarity with concerned educators nationwide. Today, school shootings are appallingly routine. Innocent lives of flourishing young people have been cut short, and students of every age in countless communities are afraid to go to school. These students are our future leaders. They and others, with a myriad of different perspectives, are also eager to change this paradigm by navigating our democratic processes, by engaging in respectful civic discourse, and by acting as catalysts for needed change, which we heartily applaud. We need to listen to their voices and respond to their pleas to make schools safe.

As educators and as citizens, we are proud Republicans, Democrats, and Independents who believe that our country need not choose between the rightful protection of responsible gun ownership and the necessary prevention of gun violence. We believe that the epidemic of gun violence in schools is an issue of non-partisan urgency, one that demands a higher duty of care.

We recall with admiration the ability to rise above partisanship on this issue displayed by two former Presidents, Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican Ronald Reagan, both of whom owned guns. In 1994, they worked together to help reduce the number of dangerous weapons available to private citizens. Sadly, nearly 25 years after their efforts, the United States still leads the world in the number of guns per capita. In a study of World Health Organization data from 23 high-income countries, an astonishing 91% of all children (aged 0 - 14 years) killed by guns were from the United States. Today, assault weapons in particular are used in a disproportionate number of mass shootings, many of which have targeted schools. As educators who work tirelessly to nurture and educate the next generation of Americans, we believe this is tragic.

We join as colleagues and implore our regional and national leaders to take the necessary steps to protect our students, teachers, and staff and, with profound resolve, to address the many factors that contribute to safe and secure educational communities, including responsible safeguards related to guns.

Never before have so many school leaders from all corners of this great nation, from every type of school, spoken with one voice to address a single issue. We are moved to do so on behalf of all of this nation's children, whose welfare and safety it is our common duty to ensure.

Respectfully,

Heads of Schools

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