

# GIFFORDS

**May 9, 2025**

Gabrielle Giffords  
Tucson, Arizona

Secretary Linda McMahon  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

In our national struggle against gun violence—both inside and outside of schools—helping people in need of care access mental health services has been a bright spot of bipartisanship. While mental illness is not the cause of gun violence, it can be a contributing factor if weak laws facilitate easy access to a gun when someone is in crisis. In 2022, after the gut-wrenching murder of 19 children and two teachers at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Republicans and Democrats worked hard to craft the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which provided schools with mental health resources to help students in need of care.

The legislation was a success. Senator Bill Cassidy, the Republican Chairman of the Senate committee that oversees the Department of Education, said at the time, “As we responded to Uvalde, my priorities were to protect law-abiding citizens’ Second Amendment rights, to provide mental health to help prevent future episodes like this but as well as to address issues such as teenage suicide, and to harden schools. This bill does all three.”

Senator Cassidy compiled a lengthy list of law enforcement, mental health, and education organizations praising the law’s approach to making our schools safer. A single piece of legislation that garners such diverse support is rare in today’s Washington, but the organizations’ statements underscore the significance of what was accomplished. I recommend reading what they had to say [here](#).

That broad bipartisan support is why I was surprised to see the Department of Education eliminate \$1 billion in grants for these important mental health programs. School-based social workers, psychologists, and counselors often serve as both frontline caregivers and first responders when a student is in crisis. Cancelling funding that kids rely on with no backup plan does not make students safer, healthier, or better able to learn.

I understand your position comes with many responsibilities and a requirement to balance competing interests, but the safety of students must always come first. To that end, I would like to invite you to sit down with the families of students who have been killed in school shootings. Having had many such conversations over the past 12 years, I sincerely believe that private conversations with those who have experienced school-based violence would aid decisionmaking and help you keep kids safe in school. I, along with GIFFORDS—the organization I founded after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in your home state of Connecticut—stand ready to help organize such a meeting or put you in touch with parents and survivors.

Everyone wants kids to be safe in school. But I have serious concerns that your department's recent cuts have made our nation's classrooms significantly more dangerous. I ask you to reconsider before it's too late.

I look forward to hearing from you.

God Bless America,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized lowercase 'g' followed by an uppercase 'G'.

Gabrielle Giffords