

April 9, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Reid,

We write in support of S. 649, the “Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act of 2013,” which seeks to curb gun violence. The Education Trust firmly believes that all children deserve safe, secure environments in which to live and study. Unfortunately, gun violence has robbed too many of our students of such environments. In 2008 and 2009, the number of preschoolers killed by guns was nearly double the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty. And, in the three months since the massacre of 20 first-graders and six educators in Newtown, Conn., there have been nine other school-related shootings, leaving 16 wounded and seven dead. This kind of violence is unacceptable. We must act now to curb the gun violence that threatens the safety of our communities and our children.

The Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act requires background checks for the sale of every firearm and requires that all individuals prohibited from buying a firearm be listed on a national registry. The School and Campus Safety Enhancements Act of 2013, contained within the bill, provides funding for schools to improve their current safety plans and purchase additional surveillance equipment. Although in no way do these proposals represent all that we must do to ensure our children are protected from gun violence, these simple measures might well have prevented the tragedy that took place in December in Newtown. We strongly support them.

We also strongly support Senator Dianne Feinstein’s proposed ban on assault weapons, to be offered as an amendment to S. 649. This legislation will limit the amount of ammunition allowed in high-capacity magazine clips and ban 157 models of assault weapons. Again, this is a simple, common-sense measure that may not fully eradicate gun violence in our country, but it certainly will go a long way to reducing the number of victims.

Thank you for your leadership in bringing the Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act to the floor and for allowing a vote on Senator Feinstein’s Assault Weapons Ban. Although we believe the ban should have been part of the base bill, we appreciate at least the opportunity to have public debate and a public vote on the issue.

Taken together, we believe these two legislative measures could dramatically reduce gun violence in the United States. The Education Trust will continue to stand up for this and other common-sense legislation to improve the safety of our nation’s children and provide them with safer, more secure schools and communities.

Sincerely,

Kati Haycock  
President

Cc: Senator Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary  
Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary