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Minnesota House of Representatives

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Our hearts break for the victims, families, and the entire school community affected by the tragic shooting in Minneapolis. The devastating events at Annunciation Catholic School serve as a painful reminder of the urgent need to reject the standard scripts that happen after a school shooting, the hand-wringing, the gamesmanship, or blame, and commit to taking action that improves safe schools and reduces gun violence.

Every child and teacher deserve a safe learning environment, and we shouldn't have to worry about the safety of our children while in school. And we all want an immediate solution – something, anything that ensures children are safe from someone who goes out of their way to target and harm children.

Behind acts of violence like the one this week at Annunciation Catholic School, there is almost always a young person in profound distress—struggling silently, without the support they desperately need. We must bring together families, educators, communities, and policymakers to ensure mental health resources are accessible, stigma is dismantled, early intervention becomes the norm and prevention is the cure. However, I have zero sympathy for shooters and wholeheartedly support mandatory minimum sentences for gun criminals.

Gun access or control measures continue to be part of the conversation and might seem like a straightforward solution to school shootings, but the issue is far more complex. For example, Minnesota has already enacted several key gun safety measures—including red flag laws, universal background checks, and prohibitions on straw purchasers—yet the threat of school violence remains.

But we also need to be honest with ourselves and each other, there is no amount of gun control or any other restriction would have stopped Vance Boelter or the Annunciation shooter.

Firearm access is an easy target but alone falls short of reducing gun violence in schools or on the street. We need to intentionally focus on violence prevention/awareness training, expanded mental and behavioral health access, flexible school safety funding with security grants; the evidence-based interventions that help reduce gun violence.

A 2004 study by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education found that nearly three-quarters of school shooters had been bullied or harassed at school. Marginalized kids that don't have trust-based adult connections, don't feel very good about themselves, and too often have lost any hope for their future.

In 2013, the American Psychological Association took an evidence-based look at the motivations that drive people to commit acts of gun violence and predictably found there are complex reasons people

resort to gun violence, and every situation is different. More importantly, they also discovered that a history of violent behavior is the most consistent and valuable predictor of future violent behavior. This same report found that policies preventing high-risk individuals from obtaining guns reduce violent outcomes.

Most people suffering from mental illness aren't dangerous and proper treatment helps prevent violence. But too many people in Minnesota suffering from mental illness don't receive adequate services, making it more difficult to identify those who may be a potential threat.

Making guns more difficult for high-risk individuals to access is one part of the equation, but it's not the only lever we have, nor is it the most important. Our first priority must be mental health interventions, early identification that identifies individuals who may be on a path toward violence, mandatory reporting, preemptive interventions and supporting at-risk youth to address the emotional and behavioral roots of violence before they reach a crisis point.

Evidence-based solutions exist to help prevent senseless tragedies and when thoughtfully implemented in schools and communities, they play a vital role in both deterring attacks and supporting vulnerable individuals. While many of us long for swift legislative action, lasting change requires a comprehensive set of policies and measurable programs that truly make a difference. But if we approach this with the idea that there is only one answer, we will fail to move forward and risk overlooking a deeper truth: healing begins when we choose to understand, invest, and take meaningful action.

Connecting and listening and getting people the help they need can help prevent future attacks and make our schools safer for children.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DN' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

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