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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

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March 30, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

No parent should fear for the safety of their child when they drop them off at school. As a parent myself, this week's shooting at Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, is a horrifying reminder that we need to ensure our schools are the safest place we can send our children.

Last year, following another tragedy, I fought for the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* (BSCA) to prevent this from happening again. I share your concern about how slowly BSCA funding is moving and agree that addressing mental health, especially the mental health of students in the wake of the pandemic and school closures, is crucial. However, physical improvements and hardening schools is also imperative to ensure our students' safety and therefore included in BSCA.

States and district leaders need to know that they can and should use these funds to harden schools. Any confusion about that fact could lead to dangerous delays in protecting our students.

To that end, the Department needs to provide a written action plan, within two weeks, detailing how it will issue explicit guidance and technical assistance to states and districts on using BSCA funds for school hardening. The plan should also include how the Department will remove federal administrative barriers to the spending of dollars by districts under BSCA. Updated guidance should be posted on a unique page on the Department's website and circulated to state education agencies via electronic documentation, within 30 days, that explicitly states that BSCA funding is eligible to be used to harden schools. Finally, the Department should provide technical assistance, including through webinars, to chief state school officers, on using BSCA to improve physical school safety.

If any of these timelines are not met, I immediately request a briefing by you personally.

Sincerely,



William M. Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions