

MEMO

To: Michigan Education Association
From: Emma White and Griffin Johnson
Re: Member attitudes regarding gun violence and gun policy in schools
Date: June 3, 2022

This memo outlines member attitudes toward gun violence in schools and potential policy solutions from the January MEA member survey¹. The January survey was conducted less than two months after the school shooting in Oxford Township, Michigan. Key findings include the following:

- 1. In January, few members were extremely concerned about gun violence and school safety compared to other issues facing schools.**

A few weeks after the Oxford shooting, around three in ten members were extremely concerned about gun violence (30%) and school safety (31%). These ranked among the bottom tier of issues, while the top concerns for members included teacher and staff shortages (67%), student behavioral issues and mental health (60%), and teacher and staff pay and benefits (58%).

The educators more likely to be worried about gun violence include:

- PreK-12 support staff (41% extremely concerned)
- ESPs (40% very concerned)
- Those over 60 (39%)
- Black members (41%)
- Members in Metro Detroit (37%) and the Flint/Tri-Cities (34%) regions
- Self-identified Democrats (35%)

¹ Survey was conducted online from January 25-28, 2022, among 2,587 MEA active members including preK-12 teachers and staff, higher education faculty and staff, and student MEA members. The data have been weighted to match the population of members by gender, age, race, member type, and modeled partisanship.

- 2. The January survey shows members are enthusiastic about a number of gun safety measures including universal background checks and penalties for providing a firearm to a minor.**

Large majorities of members strongly support the following policies:

- Raising penalties for firearms dealers who knowingly sell a firearm intended for a minor (80% strongly support, 93% total support);
- Universal background checks and increased penalties for falsifying information on firearm licensing applications (79% strongly support, 94% total support);
- Raising penalties for adults who provide minors with access to firearms (78% strongly support, 93% total support);
- “Red Flag Laws” to prevent access to firearms for those most at risk of harming themselves or others (74% strongly support, 92% total support);
- Hiring additional school counselors and psychologists to address student mental health (73% strongly support, 94% total support);
- Laws requiring secure firearm storage for gun owners (68% strongly support, 87% total support);
- Allowing districts to make their buildings gun-free zones (68% strongly support, 86% total support); and
- Requiring school personnel to report actual or implied threats to law enforcement (64% strongly support, 92% total support).

These policies have strong support across demographic and party lines. At least 71% of self-identifying Republican members and 74% of gun-owning members support each of the above policies. The most popular policy for Republican members is raising penalties for firearms dealers who knowingly sell a firearm intended for a minor (66% strong support, 85% total support).

While members support these policies across the board, women are more likely to strongly support them than men, Democrats are more likely to strongly support the policies than Republicans and Independents, and members in Metro Detroit and the Flint-Tri Cities region are more likely to strongly support them than members in other regions.

3. Majorities of members support increasing school security and active shooter drills – but “strong” support is less widespread.

Broad majorities also support the following policies, though less strongly than measures restricting access to guns and hiring additional counselors to support student mental health:

- Increasing the number of school resource officers and/or school security staff (51% strongly support, 88% total support);
- Increasing metal detectors, video surveillance, and fortified entries into schools (36% strongly support, 73% total support); and
- Increasing shooter response training and active shooter drills in schools (33% strongly support, 75% total support).

4. Broad majorities of members oppose providing gun safes in classrooms and allowing school employees with concealed carry permits to bring their guns to school.

Only around one in ten members strongly support the following policies, while majorities strongly oppose:

- Allowing school employees with concealed carry licenses to carry their personal firearm to school (10% strongly support, 54% strongly oppose); and
- Providing gun safes in each classroom (6% strongly support, 63% strongly oppose).

Even among Republican and gun-owning members, these policies are not popular. Sixty-nine percent of Republicans and 71% of gun owners oppose providing gun safes in each classroom. Forty-two percent of Republicans and 55% of gun owners oppose allowing school employees with a CPL to carry in schools.