

**Resolution No. 9-18**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 501  
TO DECLARE SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SAFETY**

WHEREAS, the Bellingham Promise, our strategic plan, declares: *We collectively commit that our students are cared for and respected... achieve a fulfilling and productive life... are respectful and compassionate humans... are healthy, active individuals... and should be loved;* and

WHEREAS, the Board's highest priority is to ensure that all students receive a quality education and achieving that priority requires learning environments that are safe, secure and supportive; and

WHEREAS, we are confronted with a public health epidemic in which school children are being slaughtered by gun violence and that according to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) shootings are the third leading cause of death of American children; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, there have been 300 shootings on elementary, middle, high school and college campuses in the United States, averaging about one per week<sup>1</sup>, and 168 of those shootings were at K-12 schools<sup>2</sup>; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, eight school shootings have occurred in Washington state, four of which resulted in injury or death<sup>3</sup>, and districts around Washington state have been the scenes of gun violence and threats of gun violence; and

WHEREAS, gun violence is a danger to the students, families, educators, paraeducators, administrators, support staff and volunteers of the Bellingham School District, and disproportionately has a greater impact on people of color; and

WHEREAS, in Washington state, an 18-year-old can buy a military style assault weapon with no enhanced background check or waiting period<sup>4</sup>; and

WHEREAS, the nation's data collection on gun violence and gun ownership is inadequate to monitor, understand or prevent these events from happening, and further, the CDC has been restricted by federal law from adequate study of this public health crisis. From 2012 through 2016, there was an annual average of 35,141 deaths caused by firearms in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>; and

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<sup>1</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety; School Shootings in America Since 2013. February 2018, <https://everytownresearch.org/school-shootings/>.

<sup>2</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety; Keep Guns Out of Elementary, Middle, and High Schools; February 2018; <https://everytownresearch.org/guns-in-elementary-middle-and-high-schools>.

<sup>3</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety; 291 School Shootings in America since 2013; <https://everytownresearch.org/schoolshootings/#2919>

<sup>4</sup> [www.seattletimes.com/opinion/washington-lawmakers-should-take-vote-on-assault-weapons-limits/](http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/washington-lawmakers-should-take-vote-on-assault-weapons-limits/)

<sup>5</sup> <https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-by-the-numbers/>

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WHEREAS, military style assault weapons have no place in society due to their intended purpose, and other guns are too easily obtained; and

WHEREAS, Washington State law (RCW 28A.600.420 and RCW 9.41.280) and Bellingham School District Policy (BSD 3200) already prohibit weapons and firearms on school properties; and

WHEREAS, teachers are not trained law enforcement officers and should not be asked or incentivized to keep weapons accessible in their classrooms; and

WHEREAS, there is no reason based upon any viable research to suggest that adding guns into a school setting or arming teachers would prevent these acts of violence; and

WHEREAS, gun violence and threats of gun violence in schools undermine the sense of security that all students should have in their learning environment; and

WHEREAS, sensible gun safety legislation will strengthen protections for our schools and students by preventing individuals from obtaining firearms; and

WHEREAS, many of our students have publicly expressed concern for their safety and well-being and have indicated that policymakers should act immediately to protect them in school and beyond; and

WHEREAS, Congress and the Washington State Legislature have yet to ban the sale of assault weapons, raise the minimum age for the purchase of handguns, establish universal background checks, and establish waiting periods before taking possession of a weapon; and

WHEREAS, some leading gun sellers (Dick's Sporting Goods, Walmart, and Kroger) have voluntarily ended their sales of assault weapons and voluntarily raised the age at which one can purchase a handgun to 21; and

WHEREAS, other individuals, pawn shops and retailers in our community continue to sell assault weapons and handguns to buyers who are as young as 18; and

WHEREAS, the multiple school shootings that the nation has witnessed over the years have complex causes requiring multiple solutions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Directors of Bellingham School District No. 501 as follows:

1. That the Board calls for sensible gun safety legislation at the federal, state and local levels that protects students and staff, including, but not limited to:
  - a. raising the age to purchase firearms to 21;

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- b. implementing enhanced background checks for assault weapons;
  - c. banning the purchase and sale of assault or semi- automatic rifles and of any accessories designed to increase a gun's rate of fire;
  - d. establishing safety programs in schools that do NOT include arming educators or staff;
  - e. eliminating private gun sale loopholes;
  - f. providing funding for thorough gun violence research, including removing the prohibition on research and data collection by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);
  - g. supporting prevention, intervention and community re-entry programs that reduce community and gun violence; and
  - h. increasing funding for programs, training, and school staffing, including but not limited to counselors, behavioral technicians, nurses, psychologists and social workers, that support student and educator mental health, social and emotional learning, restorative justice, and combat bullying.
  - i. supporting programs and strategies that limit children's access to firearms.
2. The Board supports legislation under consideration by the Washington State Legislature that would enact some of the above measures.
  3. The Board supports legislation that would reject arming school staff, that maintains existing regulation of firearms at school, and the Board does not support efforts to arm educators and staff.
  4. The Board calls upon all firearms sellers in our local and extended community to voluntarily refrain from selling firearms to individuals under 21 years of age.

ADOPTED this 18<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2018, by the Board of Directors of the Bellingham School District No. 501, Whatcom County, Washington, at a meeting held thereof.

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Kelly Bashaw, President

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Camille Diaz Hackler, Vice President

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Douglas W. Benjamin, Director

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Quenby M. Peterson, Director

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Jenn Mason, Director

ATTEST:

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Greg Baker, Ed.D.,  
Superintendent and  
Secretary to the Board