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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
2181 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
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January 31, 2013

The Honorable Arne Duncan  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Mr. Secretary:

President Obama recently stated, "We won't be able to stop every violent act, but if there is even one thing that we can do to prevent any of these events, we have a deep obligation, all of us, to try."<sup>1</sup> The horrific events at Sandy Hook Elementary School have sparked a national conversation about school safety. While we agree we cannot stop every senseless act of violence, we share the president's commitment to reviewing the facts and evaluating proposed and existing policies and programs intended to help teachers, principals, and parents protect their children.

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce takes seriously this responsibility to the nation's teachers, principals, and superintendents, as well as the parents and children who deserve access to a quality education in a safe learning environment. We are already examining the needs of our nation's elementary and secondary schools, both public and private; studying the effectiveness of existing federal K-12, juvenile justice, and other child safety programs; and considering whether additional tools are needed to help protect students.

The administration's plan to address gun violence consists of 23 executive actions and a series of Congressional proposals. To assist the committee's efforts to evaluate the administration's various school safety and mental health proposals and examine the effectiveness of existing federal programs, we request you provide the committee with the following information:

Executive Actions

1. Please describe the timeline the department will use to implement the executive actions announced by the president on January 16, 2013, including those initiatives jointly conducted between agencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by President Barack Obama announcing the release of "Now is the Time: the President's Plan to Protect our Children and our Communities by Reducing Gun Violence," January 16, 2013.

2. Please provide additional details on the purpose, schedule, and end result of the mental health listening tour.
3. The president's plan indicates each agency will be issuing "best practices" to address school safety. What methodology will the department use to determine best practices for elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education? How will the department address the differences and diversity among our nation's schools?
4. The president's plan to release model emergency plans for schools and institutions of higher education and provide security assessments seem to displace many activities currently provided by the private sector. What steps is the department taking to ensure it is not supplanting private companies?
5. Please provide a cost estimate of the policies included in the executive actions issued by the president (e.g., development of model emergency plans, the completion of security assessments, and the mental health listening tour). Please identify the specific account from which such actions will be funded.
6. Please provide the legislative authority the department is expected to invoke to carry out the executive actions announced by the president on January 16, 2013.

#### Congressional Proposals

1. Will the new school safety and mental health proposals be included in the president's budget request for fiscal year 2014? How will the programs be reconciled with past efforts to consolidate safe and drug free schools funding? In what office at the department would the proposed new programs be housed?
2. Please indicate how the administration's proposals differ significantly from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program, Project SERV, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, Grants for Integration of Schools and Mental Health Services and the Promotion of School Readiness through Early Childhood Emotional and Social Development Program, currently or previously funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act?
3. Will the new proposals replace the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program, Project SERV, and the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program?
4. How will these new programs address the shortcomings raised through numerous evaluations of the Safe and Drug Free Schools State Grant program (i.e., where funds were spread too thin to make a substantial difference in preventing school violence)?
5. How will the new school mental health proposals align with special education and related services offered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which promotes service integration and the coordination of state and local education, mental health, and other services?
6. How will the new school mental health proposals align with state and local mental health-related programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including, but not limited to: School-Based Health Centers authorized by section 4101 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families program, and Statewide Family Network Grants administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration?


Existing Programs

1. Please provide the program goals and actual performance for the Safe and Drug Free Schools State Grant program, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program, Project SERV, the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Program, Grants for Integration of Schools and Mental Health Services, and the Promotion of School Readiness through Early Childhood Emotional and Social Development Program for the past five fiscal years. For defunded programs, please provide the program goals and performance data for the last five years the program received federal funds.
2. Please provide the budget justifications, relevant annual reports required under law, and program evaluations conducted or funded, in whole or part, by the department for the above referenced programs.
3. Please provide a list of grantees and subgrantees, if possible, that received funds for the last five fiscal years for the above referenced programs.
4. What percentage of federal funds under the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program is spent on counseling, mentoring, and referral services provided by school-based mental health service providers? What percentage of program funds is spent on the training of teachers to appropriately identify and intervene in at-risk behavior?
5. What steps has the department taken to implement the terms of section 822 of the Higher Education Act regarding model emergency response policies, procedures, and practices, including information sharing between the department and institutions of higher education?


The information you provide will be used by the committee to inform discussion during an upcoming hearing on school safety. We respectfully request your staff contact our staff to schedule a briefing to take place no later than February 7, 2013.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN KLINE  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce



VIRGINIA FOXX  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Higher Education and  
Workforce Training



TODD ROKITA  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary  
and Secondary Education