



July 26, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and  
Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20201

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

Dear Secretary Becerra and Secretary Cardona:

On behalf of America Forward and the America Forward Coalition, I write to share our Coalition's input as you work to implement the programs authorized under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 that are funded through your respective agencies.

Unfortunately, school violence has fundamentally reshaped the educational experience for an entire generation of students, educators, families, and school communities. Critically important efforts to advance common sense gun control and strengthen mental health supports must be joined by similarly committed efforts to deeply embed innovative, trauma-informed approaches in education policy.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act focuses federal investments on a number of mental health and school based programs that many of our Coalition members engage in and partner with state and local entities in the delivery of, including:

- Increasing funding for existing student support programs, mental health training for teachers, and out of school programs;
- Providing \$500 million in school-based mental health service grants; and
- Boosting Title IV-A by \$1 billion.

As you look to implement this funding, we urge you to focus on ensuring that students receive access to positive developmental relationships, resources, and learning opportunities that foster their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative skills. Additionally, it is important that you prioritize funding for programs with demonstrated effectiveness in providing innovative, evidence-based approaches that improve holistic outcomes for students, effectively engage families, and support educators and leverage the expert role of non-profit partners in delivering such approaches.

Thank you for your consideration and for the work you and your agencies are doing for our nation's children, educators, schools, and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah S. Smolover". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Deborah S. Smolover  
Executive Director  
America Forward

**About America Forward**

America Forward is the Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan policy initiative of New Profit, a pioneering national venture philanthropy organization that invests in a portfolio of breakthrough social entrepreneurs and systems-change initiatives, catalyzes and builds their impact, and transforms how government and philanthropy pursue social change to ensure that all people can thrive.

America Forward unites social innovators with policymakers to advance a public policy agenda that advances equity, fosters innovation, rewards results, catalyzes cross-sector partnerships, and transforms local impact into national change. The America Forward Coalition comprises a network of over 100 social innovation organizations that champion innovative, effective, and efficient solutions to our country's most pressing social problems. Since 2007, our Coalition organizations have successfully advocated for lasting policy change in education, workforce development, and Pay for Success policy; leveraged \$1.7 billion for social innovation; and driven millions of federal resources toward programs that are achieving measurable results for those who need them most.