



AN OPEN LETTER TO ALL HIGH SCHOOLS FROM
THE STATE STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

There have been 8 school shootings since the beginning of 2018—eight. 22 lives. It has only been two months and 22 children, siblings, cousins, and friends that won't be able to grow up to graduate, go to college, or get married. Winston Salem, North Carolina; Italy, Texas; Benton, Kentucky; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; Oxon Hill, Maryland; Nashville, Tennessee; Parkland, Florida. What each community has suffered during successive school shootings is no less than a horrific tragedy. It's not just our state that is grieving, it is our nation and we as the voice of over half a million students in Connecticut will not stand for this anymore. If we do not speak up, no one will.

The CT State Legislature created the State Student Advisory Council on Education (SSACE) with the intent of providing students a voice in legislation related to schools and the education system. For the past twenty years, SSACE has dedicated monthly meetings to influencing legislation and adapting it to the changing needs of Connecticut students. We have conducted action research recommendations on reducing the achievement gap, reforming standardized testing, and instituting programs promoting health and wellness to list a few topics. After the latest shooting in Florida, it has become the responsibility of high school students to spearhead a national movement for change — from Parkland to Columbine to Newtown.

Connecticut students *see* the world, *see* its problems, and *see* the need for change. Focusing on kindness and inclusivity are the core of violence prevention and improving school climate. During the month of April, schools across the state of Connecticut will be participating in a unity week entitled “**CT SEES**”. We encourage school and student leaders to choose a week in April to hold a “**CT SEES**” Week in their own district. This event will embody the core ideas of compassion, teamwork, and most importantly safety.

We encourage not only statewide unity, but a joining together of schools across the nation. The fact that students will no longer sit down and remain victims must be acknowledged. Collectively, the country's student body must recognize that through their combined efforts to change outdated legislation, they will change the future. Hundreds upon thousands of students are proactively calling for positive change. We encourage school administrators to support these efforts.

In recent weeks, students across these United States have been clear in their resolve and mission: **No More**. The blood of innocent children shall not have been shed in vain. We can do better and we must do better to protect every school, small and large, elementary to high school. We find inaction intolerable and apathy abhorrent. This new century demands true leadership to guide the winds of change and it is on these grounds that we entreat your immediate attention and action. Therefore, we implore the State of Connecticut High Schools to pursue a national initiative and interstate cooperation in the following areas: *Engage* with the voices of concerned citizens, especially students, *Ensure* absolute school safety for every district, *Enforce* existing gun laws, *Expand* the implementation of background checks, *Examine* the role and prevalence of mental health in violence, and *Encourage* a renewed culture of unity through the indomitable American spirit.

We hope that you will join us in this effort. Thank you.