



## Newtown Federation of Teachers Local 1727

An affiliate of the  
American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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January 16, 2013

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Co-Chair, House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee  
2413 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. DeLauro:

Thank you for helping to lead the conversation about how we keep our schools and communities safe, and for allowing the educators of Newtown to be heard on this critical topic.

Healing from the tragedy that struck our town will take time. And we really need to be focused on three things—head, heart and body—the assurance of safe buildings and school campuses, emotional support following this traumatic event, and full participation in planning and implementing strategies to create safer schools and neighborhoods.

During this difficult time, collaboration, effective two-way communication, and valuing the voice and experience of frontline educators, along with the entire school community of administrators, parents, our fellow school staff and others, are all essential to moving forward on the solutions that will make our schools and all of Newtown safer, stronger and more united. Without this collaboration and communication, educators and children cannot feel safe in schools, parents will continue to worry about their children's safety, and our schools won't be able to focus on our core mission—teaching and learning.

As educators, we bring a unique and important perspective to this nationwide debate. We see children in a different way than other adults in the community do, because we are with students each day, helping them grow and develop. Along with their parents, we know what our students need; we also know our classrooms and schools inside and out. Every day, we seek to create a safe, secure and nurturing environment for the children we teach and love—it is our instinct and duty as educators.

School really matters. It's where children make friends, it's where they grow and flourish. As we move forward to create and implement solutions and strategies for school safety, we need to strike the right balance to ensure that schools are nurturing while also being safe. We need to strike the right balance so that schools do not become armed fortresses where kids are unable to be kids. The voice of educators is

crucial to ensuring that we find and maintain this balance between safety and learning.

The tragic events of Dec. 14 have only strengthened our belief that the voice of educators in the development and implementation of policies that impact our classrooms and our students is crucial. It increases our capacity to heal as one community and is in the best interest of our students, who are looking to us for reassurance that our schools are safe. We hope that our superintendent and school board share this view and choose to work collaboratively moving forward.

What is best for Newtown is for us all to work together. With so much at stake, we must move forward in partnership with administrators and the entire Newtown community to help us all heal and do what is best for our children. The educators of Newtown remain willing and committed to seeking solutions that improve our community and help our children learn and grow.

On behalf of the members of the Newtown Federation of Teachers, #1727, affiliated with AFT Connecticut and the American Federation of Teachers, we thank you for this opportunity to be heard, and we look forward to working with you and others to do what is best for Newtown and the children we love.

Tom Kuroski, President

Mary Connelly, Newtown Middle School Vice President

Valerie LeBlanc, Treasurer

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