

Montana Gathering of Friends Minute on Community Violence:

We, the Montana Gathering of Friends, are heartbroken over the lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida last week and the 33,000 people who lose their lives to guns each year through suicide, spousal abuse, accidents, and mass shootings. We are heartened by young people across the country finding their voice on the issue of gun violence with clarity about how it impacts their safety, security, well-being and hope for the future. We empathize with the pain and fear they feel going to school every day with the knowledge that the students and teachers they value in their own schools and in schools across the country that face this threat.

Though we recognize the current need for defense procedures, we hold the belief that establishing lasting safety is more important than solely ensuring physical defense. The idea of bringing guns into schools to protect from shooters- who often are students themselves- is a violence that is just as scary as the threat it's reacting to. Our schools are not war zones.

Our children demand that our government, school systems and the adults in their lives take this problem seriously and take steps to face the root causes of violence in our society. A sense of safety needs to be established for everyone in our schools, including and especially those students who could potentially be violent towards themselves or others. We support our youth in sharing their hopes and concerns. We join in their vision of a world without a ubiquitous background of violence where people learn how to express feelings of anger and pain constructively. We have been numb to this need for too long. An issue this important should not be polarizing and it should not be postponed. We should look towards peace through compromise and engagement. This is an issue for us to unite around in protection of the kids and people we love.