RESOLUTION 2018-01

Promoting Safe and Supportive Schools and Colleges

WHEREAS: in spite of numerous school and college shootings resulting in increased fear and anxiety for students, their families, and employees in schools, along with the unacceptable injury, death, and trauma to students and employees, common sense legislative measures to reduce the likelihood of gun violence have not been implemented at the federal level, nor adequately at the state and local level in Washington State, nor have mental health counseling services at schools and colleges been adequately funded; and

WHEREAS: the American School Counselors Association recommends a 1:250 counselor to student ratio in K-12 education, but the current average ratio in Washington State is 1:487; and

WHEREAS: the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. recommends a mental health counselor to student ratio of 1:1000/1500 in post-secondary education, and the national average is 1:1600; and

WHEREAS: only four Washington state community and technical colleges meet the national average while our four-year institutions have lower ratios but still require additional resources to provide adequate mental health services to students; and

WHEREAS: research indicates that adequate counseling services contribute to multiple positive outcomes for students throughout their educational experience, including academic success, social connectedness, and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS: high visibility and ready access to counseling services in schools and colleges can increase emotional and social well-being and increase the frequency of students’ use of counseling services; and

WHEREAS: the student victims of the February 14, 2018, shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School are demonstrating powerful and committed leadership in order to address the issue of gun violence at schools and colleges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: that AFT Washington will urge members and leaders of its affiliates to engage stakeholders at their schools and colleges in a solution-focused conversation on the matter of safety from gun violence, including suicide, for students and employees at their school or college; and, be it further

RESOLVED: that AFT Washington and its affiliates advocate against policy and legislation that seeks to arm employees with guns in their workplace, except for security personnel; and, be it further

RESOLVED: that AFT Washington will advocate for state laws and policies that serve to promote safety at schools and colleges, such as SB 5050 which would have addressed the availability and prevalence of semi-automatic rifles in Washington
State, and for revocation of the federal Dickey Amendment and increased advocacy by the Centers for Disease Control to promote evidence-based legislation to improve safety and security in our schools and colleges; and, be it further

**RESOLVED:** that AFT Washington will engage its membership in advocacy to increase funding specifically to increase counseling services at schools and colleges in order to achieve the recommended ratios of counselors to students so that students’ social-emotional needs are fully met as called for in SB 6514; and, be it finally

**RESOLVED:** that AFT Washington will encourage participation in upcoming events throughout Washington State in support of promoting safe schools and colleges, including but not limited to, a walk-out on March 14 and actions on March 24 and April 20, 2018.

1 – Senate Bill 6514
