

RESOLUTION 2018-01

1 Promoting Safe and Supportive Schools and Colleges

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

9 **WHEREAS:** the American School Counselors Association recommends a 1:250 counselor to
10 student ratio in K-12 education, but the current average ratio in Washington
11 State is 1:487¹; and

12 **WHEREAS:** the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. recommends a mental
13 health counselor to student ratio of 1:1000/1500 in post-secondary education,
14 and the national average is 1:1600²; and

15 **WHEREAS:** only four Washington state community and technical colleges meet the national
16 average while our four-year institutions have lower ratios but still require addi-
17 tional resources to provide adequate mental health services to students²; and

18 **WHEREAS:** research indicates that adequate counseling services contribute to multiple pos-
19 itive outcomes for students throughout their educational experience, including
20 academic success, social connectedness, and emotional well-being³; and

21 **WHEREAS:** high visibility and ready access to counseling services in schools and colleges
22 can increase emotional and social well-being and increase the frequency of stu-
23 dents' use of counseling services³; and

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

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

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

35 **RESOLVED:** that AFT Washington will advocate for state laws and policies that serve to pro-
36 mote safety at schools and colleges, such as SB 5050 which would have ad-
37 dressed the availability and prevalence of semi-automatic rifles in Washington

38 State, and for revocation of the federal Dickey Amendment and increased advocacy
39 by the Centers for Disease Control to promote evidence-based legislation to
40 improve safety and security in our schools and colleges; and, be it further

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

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

1 – Senate Bill 6514

2 – Report on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Higher Education, November 2016;
http://www.councilofpresidents.org/docs/r_d_docs/2016_Mental_Health_Suicide_Prevention_Higher_Ed.pdf

3 – Statement regarding recommended staff to student ratios, International Association of
Counseling Service, Inc.; <http://www.iacsinc.org/staff-to-student-ratios.html>

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