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Press Release on Gun Violence at Denver East High School

Denver, CO – The recent spate of gun violence incidents in Colorado schools has left the community grieving and frightened. The most recent incident at East High School has left many reeling, but The Conflict Center is committed to working with the community to ensure that students and staff feel safe at school. Our hearts are with the victims of the recent shooting at East and all East students, families and staff as they process these traumatic events. We are grateful for the prognosis of both administrators.

The Conflict Center recognizes the need for immediate action and we caution against reactive measures that do not address root causes of violence. We applaud the addition of mental health support in schools and we have concerns about the recent memorandum from Superintendent Marrero and the DPS School Board placing armed guards back in all high schools for the rest of the year.

The Conflict Center believes that the involvement and voices of students must be central in any dialogue and action regarding safety in schools and youth violence. Research shows that the presence of School Resource Officers (SROs) in schools does not have any impact on school shootings; rather it results in higher rates of punitive discipline, including suspensions and in-school arrests. This overuse of punitive discipline has created a

school-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately affects students of color and other marginalized groups.

The Conflict Center also recognizes that the presence of guns in schools can create psychological distress for students and staff, even in the hands of armed police. We support community-centered violence reduction approaches that address root causes and prioritize mental health supports, restorative practices and addressing foundational needs of youth.

The next steps taken by the Denver Public Schools Administration are critical, and we stand ready to work with the community to create plans that look at root causes and are research-informed regarding what measures actually work to address violence in schools.

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View full TCC Statement [Here](#)

Resources for Continued Education

- [American Civil Liberties Union \(ACLU\) report: “Cops and No Counselors: How the Lack of School Mental Health Staff is Harming Students”](#): This report examines the impact of police in schools and argues that investing in mental health resources would be more effective in creating safe school environments.
- [Advancement Project report: “Police in Schools Are Not the Answer to the Newtown Shooting”](#): This report argues that police in schools are not effective in preventing mass shootings and can lead to increased criminalization of students.
- [National Education Policy Center report: “Police in Schools: An Overview of the Debate and of the Research”](#): This report provides an overview of the debate over police in schools and analyzes the available research on the topic.
- [Do school resource officers make schools safer?](#)