



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY

STATE SENATE

August 10, 2023

The Honorable Miguel A. Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Subject: Concerns Regarding Withholding Funds for Elementary and Secondary Schools with Hunting and Archery Programs

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our deep concern over the recent misinterpretation of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) by the U.S. Department of Education to withhold critical funds for elementary and secondary schools that have hunting and archery programs in their curriculum. As a supporter of education and an advocate for the well-being of students, we believe it is essential to reconsider this decision and ensure that these valuable programs continue to receive the necessary support.

To illustrate the importance to Kentucky specifically, we need only to look at data provided by Lisa Johnson, the Kentucky National Archery in Schools Program (NASP) state coordinator through the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, which highlights the significant impact of archery programs on students across our state. According to annual reporting from the 2,976 certified archery instructors in Kentucky, they have been working with 771 schools, where 111,838 students receive introductory archery during the school day, and another 26,257 students are engaged in after-school programs in just the last year. These programs play a crucial role in providing enriching experiences and educational opportunities for our children.

The decision to withhold funds has a direct and adverse effect on these programs, which rely on grants to supply archery equipment for school start-up initiatives and support the delivery of after-school programs. As Tommy Floyd, NASP president and longtime Kentucky educator, rightly points out, "Discouraging any funding source for the betterment of children can be detrimental."

Moreover, these archery, trapshooting, and hunter education programs provide numerous benefits to student participants. Aside from honing archery and trapshooting skills, they teach safety and sportsmanship, foster connections among students, instill a sense of belonging within a team, and promote a positive mental outlook. In a time when our students' mental health is in question, it is crucial

The Honorable Miguel A. Cardona

Page 2

August 10, 2023

to support programs that provide positive role models and coaches to kids, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging.

Kentucky's leadership in the NASP, with one of the highest percentages of "Academic Archers" in the nation, serves as a testament to the effectiveness of these programs in positively impacting student outcomes. The benefits of student participation in shooting sports extend far beyond the range, contributing to their personal growth and development.

Furthermore, I would like to bring to your attention that Kentucky had the honor of hosting the NASP National Tournament in May. This prestigious event saw the participation of over 15,000 archers from across the United States. The tournament not only showcased the talent and dedication of young archers but also served as a testament to the success and popularity of archery programs in schools.

It is important to highlight that archery and shooting sports offer many scholarship opportunities for students. These programs not only provide valuable skills and experiences but also open doors to higher education and future career paths. By withholding funds for schools with these programs, we risk limiting access to such scholarship opportunities for deserving students, particularly those with a passion and talent for these disciplines.

In light of the data and the positive impact of these programs, we urge the U.S. Department of Education to reconsider the decision to withhold funds for elementary and secondary schools with hunting and archery programs. Investing in such initiatives will not only enrich the education of our children but also empower them to develop crucial life skills and values that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I hope you will give this issue the consideration it deserves, and I look forward to a positive resolution that prioritizes the well-being and development of our students.

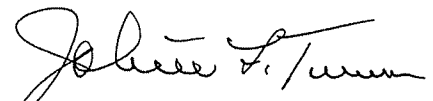
Respectfully,



Stephen West
State Senator, District 27



Phillip Wheeler
State Senator, District 31



Johnnie Turner
State Senator, District 29

cc: Governor Andy Beshear