



## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS, INC.

*Representing America's Finest*

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### **NAPO Statement on the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act**

Alexandria, VA – The National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) has long been concerned with the intersection between untreated mental illness and violent crime. The bipartisan Safer Communities Act, introduced by Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Chris Murphy (D-CT), seeks to address this important issue through additional funding for law enforcement, schools, and behavior health services within our communities.

This legislation authorizes \$750 million over five years for a new purpose area under the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) program. This program assists states and localities in implementing or enhancing crisis intervention programs from mental health courts to drug courts to assisted outpatient treatment courts and extreme risk protection programs. Importantly, states and localities can choose how to use this funding to best meet their communities' needs.

The Safer Communities Act also authorizes an additional \$300 million for the STOP School Violence programs through Byrne JAG and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) programs, to harden schools and assist in hiring and training School Resource Officers. NAPO supported the enactment of the STOP School Violence Act and the additional funding and support provided through the Safer Communities Act will be essential to help keep our students and schools safe.

On the criminal justice front, the Safer Communities Act provides resources to improve the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), makes straw purchasing and gun trafficking, including across the border, explicit federal crimes, and enhances criminal penalties for those affiliated with a gang, cartel, or organized crime ring.

While NAPO strongly supports ensuring criminals and those who are demonstrably at risk of harming themselves or others are unable to possess firearms, it is equally important to us that lawful citizens' Second Amendment rights are not infringed upon. This bill contains robust due process and legal protections for citizens to ensure that no individual who has the legal right to own and possess a firearm can be denied that Constitutional right.

Law enforcement agencies across the country are struggling to contain the violent crime that is plaguing our communities. Mental and behavioral health issues are a significant aspect of this crime and violence, and we hope that by providing robust resources to address these issues, both inside and outside of the criminal justice system, the Safer Communities Act will indeed help make our communities safer. We appreciate Senators Cornyn and Murphy taking into consideration law enforcement's priorities in the Safer Communities Act.

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*The National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) is a coalition of police units and associations from across the United States that serves to advance the interests of America's law enforcement officers through legislative and legal advocacy, political action, and education. Founded in 1978, NAPO now represents more than 1,000 police units and associations, and 241,000 sworn law enforcement officers.*