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**The Kids are *Not* Alright-- Mental Health Resources as a bi-partisan step
towards ending gun violence in schools**

Abstract:

Breaking records is something that many celebrate, whether it be a new race time, or the biggest gumball, and this year the United States got a world record of its own. In 2018 the United States had the worst year for school shootings in our recorded history. There were nearly 100 school shootings in 2018 with nearly a quarter of those involving injuries and/or fatalities. With a US school year averaging 180 days, that comes out to an average of one violent school shooting every 8 days. Gun violence in general has caused the deaths of nearly 14 thousand people in the United States. (Coughlan 2018).

Columbine. Sandy Hook. Marjory Stoneman Douglas. These are all places that were once ordinary hometowns and now serve as painful reminders of deadly school shootings. They are a reminder of the lives lost at school due to gun violence. According to BBC News, 2018 was the worst year on record for school shootings with initial figures dating back to 1970. This shows the imminence of the issue of school shootings.

Firearms remain the second leading cause of death among US children and teens. While there are many other facets to tackling an issue such as gun violence, mental health is a facet that is fairly bipartisan, (this is seen in past legislative proposals with bipartisan co-sponsorship regarding the connection between mental health and ending gun violence). This is a crisis in the United States specifically within schools and in connection to lacking mental health resources and education.

The legislative partisanship that typically surrounds gun violence and school shootings largely surrounds laws related to the physical gun and gun access. Many Republicans believe that some of the solutions suggested surrounding the physical gun

and access to it infringe upon citizens' second amendment right to bear arms. Many Democrats believe that new gun regulations and background checks are necessary for citizens' overall safety. But as I mentioned above, there is a long list of possible factors relating to gun violence, and mental health is consistently one of the most bipartisan facets. Some recent examples of bipartisan efforts to combat gun violence and school shootings include the Red Flag Laws and the Mental Health in Schools Act of 2017.

Gun violence has been known to have a correlation with poor mental health, lack of mental health resources, and education surrounding how to help. This is not to say that those who have mental illness are dangerous, but it is to say that according to the Los Angeles Times, "at least 59% of the 185 public mass shootings that took place in the United States from 1900 through 2017 were carried out by people who had either been diagnosed with a mental disorder or demonstrated signs of serious mental illness prior to the attack."

This means that a majority of mass shooters between 1900 and 2017, (59% of them), had some connection to having poor mental health before the shooting. This shows a tie between mental illness and mass shootings. And while not all school shootings are mass shootings, the same overall goal would still apply to all shootings and work to stop the shooter before any action is carried out.

Along with this data, Mental Health America (MHA) emphasizes that most people with serious mental illness are never violent with 95-97% of gun violence not attributed to mental illness. This shows that a large majority of people who are mentally ill are not a threat to the safety of others. When a new mass shooter is revealed to be mentally ill, often the general public starts to point fingers at the entire population of mentally ill persons as a threat, when in fact this is a quick mis-judgement.

By examining historical research and analyzing statistics that surround mass and school shootings I intend to explain why there is a need for immediate action to improve mental health services, resources, and education in US schools to prevent school shootings. I want to express that the use of this policy would not be instead of gun control legislation, but as an additional bipartisan immediate effort.