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# Labor Voices: We must find the will to act on gun violence

**Paula Herbart**

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Hana St. Juliana. Tate Myre. Madisyn Baldwin. Justin Shilling.

Arielle Anderson. Brian Fraser. Alexandria Verner.

I could spend the 600 words of this column just printing the names of young people killed by gun violence in our schools, starting with these seven murdered at Oxford High School and Michigan State University.

Because, frankly, I'm running out of ways to ask a simple question — why won't we do anything to stop our children from being gunned down?

We can't keep doing this. We can't accept school shootings as a normal part of life, offer "thoughts and prayers" and move on. We can't keep wondering if today is the day the unthinkable happens to one of our children or grandchildren.

Every time tragedy strikes, the call is renewed for elected leaders to take meaningful action to protect our children from gun violence and pass reasonable gun safety laws.

This time, there is real hope for action with a new legislative majority's will to act.

The Michigan Education Association strongly supports a package of gun safety bills introduced in the state Legislature, including:

Universal background checks for all gun sales, including sales between private parties.

Extreme risk protection laws to keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a danger to themselves and others.

Safe storage requirements to keep guns at home securely locked up and out of children's hands, while also increasing penalties for adults who fail to secure their firearms and allow

them to fall into the wrong hands.

These are common-sense proposals that are overwhelmingly supported by voters, regardless of their political party. An EPIC-MRA poll conducted last fall found that 90% of Michigan voters support universal background checks, 73% support extreme risk protection laws, and 82% support safe storage requirements and increased accountability for gun owners. The survey shows each of these proposals is supported by a strong majority of both gun owners and self-identified Republicans.

The gun lobby and those on the extreme political fringes don't support these reforms, and they're sure to make up lies to protect their profits and power. But we can no longer allow that to stop us — to continue watching innocent children gunned down by people who shouldn't have firearms. To continue watching communities be torn apart by tragedy. To continue watching parents lose their children.

We need to let lawmakers from both parties know it's time to listen to everyday people, not gun industry political action committees and political extremists.

It's time to stop wasting precious time arguing whether the solution lies in stronger gun safety laws, more mental health resources or ensuring prosecutors enforce the law.

This is not an either/or situation. We do need reasonable gun safety laws; we do need increased mental health support; and we do need prosecutors to be tougher on gun crimes and get illegal guns off the streets.

We need all of these things now, before the next tragedy strikes and more children have their young lives snuffed out by gun violence.

It's too late for Arielle, Brian and Alexandria. It's too late for Hana, Tate, Madisyn and Justin. It's too late for all of those students who died at Uvalde, Stoneman Douglas, Sandy Hook, Virginia Tech and far too many more.

But it's not too late to protect future generations of students.

We finally have a real opportunity here in Michigan to make a positive change and protect our kids from gun violence. We can allow our children to grow, thrive and live long, productive, happy lives.

Now we just need the strength to act.

*Paula Herbart is president of the Michigan Education Association.*