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Good Afternoon to the Commission and to those in the room listening to these testimonies; and thank you for this opportunity to speak to the Federal School Safety Commission today.

My name is Dr. Lynn Gangone and I serve as the President and CEO of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, or AACTE. AACTE is a national alliance of educator preparation programs dedicated to high-quality, evidence-based preparation that ensures educators are profession-ready as they enter the classroom. The over 800 member institutions include public and private colleges and universities in every state, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam. Through advocacy and capacity building, AACTE promotes innovation and effective practices that strengthen educator preparation.

Research shows that the quality of teachers and principals is central to student learning and achievement. AACTE members are committed to continuous improvement, in partnership with our PK-12 colleagues and state and federal agencies, to help ensure that novice educators are profession-ready. However, our members do not train future teachers and principals on the safe use of firearms and do not intend to begin doing so. AACTE opposes any federal mandate to provide firearms training or to arm school personnel. Certainly, the Sandy Hook teacher who was here earlier spoke eloquently to the reasons why arming teachers is not a good idea. We also oppose the use of federal funds for these purposes.

School violence is a complex phenomenon that our members believe is best addressed at the state and local levels. An analysis completed by the Education Commission on the States in February of this year documents some of the actions that states have already taken:

- At least six states have legislation introduced that would impact the carrying of firearms on school grounds
- At least 24 states require schools to carry out periodic emergency response drills other than those for fire, tornado, or shelter in place drills
- At least 6 states have active shooter training in schools, and at least 5 more states have introduced legislation to require active shooter training

As states wrestle with this issue, AACTE and its members are taking a number of steps to support teachers and school leaders. Our state chapters are engaging in school safety with our PK-12 and policy leaders to determine the roles that the educator preparation profession can play. At the national level, AACTE is focused on deepening our understanding of key skills, such as trauma-informed instruction and threat assessment. We are working with our members to integrate these topics into both teacher and principal preparation programs. When a problem is as complex as this one is, with multiple, interrelated and intersecting variables, communities and their stakeholders must come together to engage in the careful crafting of solutions that meet the needs of teachers and students. It is vital that the best

practices and lessons learned be shared, and that moving forward we work together to develop mechanisms that fit state and local needs.

AACTE stands by the fundamental right for children to go to school and learn and for teachers to teach without fear. The sanctity of the classroom must be preserved. As the new teachers that we prepare enter the classroom, they are expected to address an ever-growing list of responsibilities that define their daily work, which includes creating a safe learning community for all students. As we work together to address the underlying factors that have brought about these tragic acts of school violence, we must keep the role of educators front and center and focus on maintaining environments for successful teaching and learning.

AACTE stands ready to work with the Commission and our partners to find pathways forward that are grounded in valid and reliable research and that ensure that teachers, school leaders and students can focus on their most critical jobs: teaching and learning.