



# TEXAS COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

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Jan Friese

My name is Jan Friese. I am the Executive Director of the Texas Counseling Association which represents more than 6,000 Texas professional counselors. Our members include professional school and college counselors as well as licensed professional counselors and licensed marriage and family therapists who work in a variety of settings across Texas. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Any meaningful and comprehensive response to the problem of mass shootings in our society must include improved access to counseling and mental health services for young people and their families.

Reducing the student to counselor ratio from elementary school through college will provide students with greater access to counseling and violence prevention services. Student to counselor ratios in public school settings can range from 350:1 (which is close to ideal) to 850:1, with the vast majority of schools in the area of 500 to 600 to 1. In college settings, the ratios increase significantly with some college counselors in Texas reporting ratios as high as 1500:1.

Professional school and college counselors deliver developmentally appropriate violence-prevention services that are more important than ever in addressing the roots of violence in our society. Professional school counselors teach children to regulate and understand their emotions, which helps them resolve conflicts effectively.

Professional counselors deliver targeted interventions such as small group and individual counseling for those at risk of violence. Professional counselors work with parents as partners and engage community resources to provide support and referrals when more intense interventions are needed.

By increasing access to professional counselors both in our schools and our communities those in our society who feel disconnected, isolated and unsupported will have a place to turn.

As you develop plans to address the tragedy of violence in our society, please include strategies to improve and increase access to professional counselors as an essential element of your plan.

Thank you.