



For Immediate Release

June 21, 2019

For Information Contact:
Eileen McCarron 303-946-6959 or 303-377-7697

www.ColoradoCeasefire.org

STEM Security Guard's Actions Illustrate Dangers of Arming Teachers

Highlands Ranch, CO – In the May 7th shooting at STEM School Highlands Ranch, “friendly fire” by the school’s security guard illustrates some dangers of having armed citizenry in a school environment.

Because of a dispute with the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department, the STEM school did not have School Resource Officers (SRO) assigned to the school. Rather they hired their own security guard, a former Marine who had once been with the sheriff’s department.

The Sheriff’s office has now released the results of its investigation, in which they note that the security guard actually fired twice at a sheriff’s deputy who was responding to the crisis. The investigation noted the security guard fired because he saw the muzzle of a gun. The officer was not hit, but one of the bullets wounded a female student in a classroom. Although not clearly stated in the court report, apparently that bullet either penetrated a wall or went through an opening to enter the adjacent classroom.

This example of “friendly fire,” illustrates the fallacy of one proposal for school safety. For five consecutive years, House Minority leader Patrick Neville has sponsored legislation to allow anyone with a Concealed Carry permit to be able to take their hidden handguns into public K-12 schools. Fortunately, Neville’s proposals have been rebuffed every year by the General Assembly. Other states, such as Texas and Florida, have encouraged the arming of teachers. And in Colorado, gun rights advocates are busy training teachers to be armed through a program named FASTER. (Colorado allows

charter schools and school districts to contract with “school security officers” as armed personnel.)

Classes for concealed carry permits can be as short as 4 hours. FASTER trainees undergo a 3-day class, which also includes first-aid instruction. Certainly, a security guard has even more extensive firearms and response training, yet the Highlands Ranch guard mistook a first responder for the active shooter. Far more intensive is the training for SROs, who as experienced law enforcement officers have been trained through a curriculum that takes from 16 to 40 weeks, with a required 64 hours of firearms training. SROs have an additional 40 hours of specialized training.

Eileen McCarron of Colorado Ceasefire noted that “In armed confrontations, trained law enforcement hit their target only 20% of the time.” She queried “Where do all the other 80% of those bullets go?” As occurred in the Aurora Theater, they can penetrate walls and injure people in adjoining rooms. In crowded classrooms, they can go into students’ bodies, as occurred in the STEM shooting.

Both parents and students are frightened of school shootings, which are occurring more frequently. Ceasefire suggests that solutions lie in a multi-faceted approach of prevention, threat assessment and response. Gun rights advocates proclaim that we should be putting more guns into our schools, into the hands of minimally-trained teachers and citizens. Colorado Ceasefire counters that if more guns made us safer, we would be the safest nation on earth. Rather, the U.S. gun homicide rate is 25 times that of other high-income countries.

Colorado Ceasefire, an all-volunteer statewide organization, has worked for freedom from gun violence since 2000. Ceasefire initiated and was instrumental in the enactment of the 2013 Colorado firearms laws, which included universal background checks, a high capacity magazine ban, and domestic violence firearms relinquishment. Ceasefire began advocating for an Extreme Risk law in 2016, which was signed by the Governor on April 12th this year. The law allows family members or law enforcement to petition a court to temporarily remove guns from dangerous persons.

###