



## **ELC Opposes Tamaqua Area School District Decision to Arm School Personnel**

*November 14* - The Education Law Center-PA stands with the Tamaqua Area Education Association and many in the Tamaqua school community in opposing their school district's new policy allowing teachers and administrators to carry guns. The presence of guns in schools and arming of untrained school staff pose significant safety risks to schoolchildren and communities and are not authorized by state law.

The Pennsylvania legislature and various branches of state government have commissioned studies into school climate and safety matters, which have consistently [recommended against](#) an increase in the number of guns in schools. Other research supports their conclusion. A [July 2018 article](#) in the American Journal of Public Health pointed out the absence of any empirical evidence that arming school personnel would deter gun violence in schools, while noting the likelihood that arming school personnel "would heighten levels of anxiety and negatively affect a school's climate." Arming teachers and other school personnel dramatically raises the odds that students will be injured or killed because of a fatal mistake. The presence of guns in school poses a particular danger to students of color and students with disabilities, who we know are at greater risk of being wrongfully targeted by strict security measures.

To improve safety, we must use scarce school resources to invest in evidence-based programs that build a nurturing school environment and positive school culture – engaging students and staff in activities that strengthen relationships and a sense of community. Violent incidents can be prevented before they happen, through measures such as positive behavior supports, restorative justice programs, mental health services, and school counselors and psychologists.

*For more information, contact Paul Socolar, Education Law Center: [psocolar@elc-pa.org](mailto:psocolar@elc-pa.org)*

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, trainings, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of vulnerable children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit [elc-pa.org](http://elc-pa.org) or follow on Twitter [@edlawcenterpa](https://twitter.com/edlawcenterpa).