Despite the clear danger posed to children, some lawmakers continue to push for guns in schools.

A dangerous debate is raging in a handful of states regarding arming teachers—despite the fact that the American public strongly opposes the idea. Studies show the presence of guns increases, rather than decreases, the risk of gun violence. A majority of teenagers, teachers, and parents agree that putting guns in schools would make them more dangerous. And yet lawmakers in some states are pushing to do just that.

Parents, teachers, and kids are right to be worried. Earlier this month, Giffords Law Center released our comprehensive analysis of incidents of mishandled guns in schools. We found over 60 publicly-reported incidents of adults mishandling guns in schools in the last five years. In one instance, a gun brought to school by a teacher in Missouri was stolen by two students. That same month, at a Florida elementary school, a loaded gun fell out of the pocket of a substitute teacher doing cartwheels.

And yet, lawmakers in Florida are aiming to expand the state’s guardian program with bills that purport to arm teachers. Another Florida bill goes even further by requiring sheriffs to implement a guardian program approved by a school district, even if a school doesn’t want it.

A bill currently moving in Texas removes limits on the number of school staff that may carry guns under the state’s school marshal program. Another Texas bill would allow such staff to carry a gun (instead of keeping it in a locked safe) even if they regularly work with children.

Fortunately, legislators in many states around the country are acting on bills that would restrict guns in schools, raise the minimum age, and remove access to firearms by people who show signs they are imminently dangerous. These measures are crucial to the safety of our schools, and we owe it to our children to demand that our legislators enact them.

NEW MEXICO DISARMS DOMESTIC ABUSERS
On December 5, 2016, Cheryl Mascareñas’s ex-boyfriend shot her and her three young children, killing the children. Although the shooter had been convicted of stalking another ex-girlfriend, law enforcement had no way to intervene. On April 4, Governor Grisham signed SB 328, which prevents convicted domestic abusers, including dating partners, and those subject to orders of protection from possessing firearms. The new law also creates a robust relinquishment process.

FILLING DANGEROUS GAPS IN ILLINOIS FIREARMS LAW
Illinois state law requires gun purchasers to obtain a Firearm Owners Identification (FOID) card, but gaps in the law have allowed prohibited purchasers to slip through the cracks. In February, a convicted felon with a FOID card killed five people at a workplace in Aurora. In response, Illinois Representative Kathy Willis introduced the Fix the FOID Act (HB 96), which requires in-person applications and background checks on every gun sale.
For 25 years, the legal experts at Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence have been fighting for a safer America by researching, drafting, and defending the laws, policies, and programs proven to save lives from gun violence.