



The Honorable Miguel A. Cardona  
Secretary, Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona,

We are alarmed to learn that the Department of Education has issued guidance that functionally eliminates outdoor educational and enrichment programs in our public schools — specifically, the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) and hunter education classes. We respectfully request that you amend your Department’s November 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act Stronger Connections Frequently Asked Questions – Non-Regulatory Guidance to ensure that these important programs are not viewed as “training in the use of a deadly weapon,” as the Congress intended in the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA).

We represent thousands of individuals involved in conservation, education, shooting, trapping, environmental and wildlife conservation efforts across 7 states. We work collectively to ensure wildlife conservation and the shooting sports remain an integral part of wildlife management in the United States.

As written, the department's interpretation of the BSCA precludes funding for schools that provide hunter safety classes, and those that implement the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). Hunter safety is necessary for anyone to obtain a hunting license, which is critical for funding wildlife conservation efforts in every state. Further, these courses provide basic instructions on the importance of wildlife management, maintaining landowner relations, and personal responsibility. Since 2002, more than 20 million students have participated in NASP in 49 states. This program gives students the opportunity to participate in an inclusive team sport, and has been shown to improve mental health and classroom performance. Most importantly, it provides baseline education on the safe use of archery equipment. Throughout the last 50 years, largely as a result of increased hunter safety participation and archery training, hunting-related accidents have drastically reduced. Both of these programs are a benefit to wildlife conservation and the students themselves and do not present substantial safety concerns.

New guidance from the department on this matter is imperative. Restricting educational funding as a result of participating in these programs only serves to harm the well-being and success of our students and the next generation. We encourage your Department to issue new guidance and stand ready to assist you and your staff in doing so. We appreciate your quick response to this matter.

Sincerely,

Michigan United Conservation Clubs

Idaho Wildlife Federation

Tennessee Wildlife Federation

North Carolina Wildlife Federation

Wyoming Wildlife Federation

New Mexico Wildlife Federation

Alabama Wildlife Federation