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As we approach the middle of the fall semester, I wanted to take a moment to check-in and thank you for all you do for Missouri's students and public education in our state.

Recently, you may have seen or heard about a letter the National School Boards Association sent to the White House requesting federal assistance to deal with cases of harassment and threats being made toward school board members in this tumultuous climate we face today. While we recognize that there are serious issues occurring around the country and in some communities in Missouri, we strongly disagree with the tone of the NSBA letter and especially with the call for federal involvement.

MSBA is not a subsidiary of the National School Boards Association. We are entirely separate entities. NSBA does not have any governance control over our organization. By that same token, MSBA was not consulted nor given the opportunity to advise on the NSBA letter to the White House. We were disappointed with the NSBA letter and have clearly expressed our disagreement to them in no uncertain terms.

We absolutely and unequivocally believe in the First Amendment rights of parents and all citizens to speak freely and petition their governments. We appreciate the passion parents and others have for Missouri's schools and the children we are serving. We encourage that passion and must create safe opportunities for voices to be heard.

However, there have been some instances in Missouri where the safety of our teachers, administrators and board members has been threatened. Threats of violence should never be tolerated, and we call for civility and respect alongside the passionate exchange of concerns and ideas.

At our core, the Missouri School Boards' Association is dedicated to the concept of local control. In Missouri, our local law enforcement is authorized to address threats and ensure the safety of our students, teachers and elected officials. It is the jurisdiction of the local law enforcement in Missouri to capably handle these situations and to seek additional law enforcement support, if that's ever needed. We respect their role and thank them for working to protect safe forums for school board meetings, allowing our community members' voices to be heard.

School board members, administrators, teachers and staff have been called to perform extraordinary tasks to help our children through these difficult times brought on by the pandemic. Thank you for stepping up and standing strong for all children. There has never been a time in the history of our great country and state where your service was more needed.

With gratitude,
Melissa

Melissa Randol
Executive Director
Missouri School Boards' Association