

Dear President DeGioia,

We write to respectfully demand action on campus safety. It is time for Georgetown to train and equip its campus police with firearms so that they can protect students.

The current active-shooter protocols are inadequate. If one or more illegally-armed persons enter an academic building intent on committing a massacre, students have no practical recourse but to hide under their desks and wait for Metro PD. It is necessary for the safety and security of our campus to have an armed campus police force that is ready, willing, and able to immediately confront any security threats to the main campus. In light of the recent shooting at Great Mills High School in Maryland, Georgetown's current policy is reckless and irresponsible, offering no deterrent to mass-shooters while granting easy access to defenseless students.

The tragic shooting in Maryland proved the wisdom in having capable law enforcement protection in schools. The heroism of Officer Gaskill saved lives, as did the school's policy to employ an armed school resource officer. Because of Officer Gaskill's presence inside the school, he was able to respond to the shooter in less than a minute. At Georgetown, campus police have no means of stopping a similar shooting. A police force that is primarily responsible for dialing 911 is no police force at all.

Mass shootings are typically extremely brief. The Parkland shooting lasted just six minutes. Given current protocol, by the time Metro PD responds to a shooting, it is more likely that the shooting would be over with extremely catastrophic results. Failing to respond in a timely matter almost always results in more fatalities, not to mention the possibility of the shooter or shooters escaping and inflicting more casualties elsewhere. GUPD cannot enforce a shooting perimeter with batons.

Georgetown's approach is unusual, especially in the D.C. area. Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia already have armed police on campus. According to an NBC 4 report from February 22nd, police officers are present in almost all high schools in the region, including every high school in Fairfax, Loudon, Prince William, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties. For years, schools across the country have relied on law enforcement to keep their students safe. Georgetown's police officers are authorized to carry firearms by Metro PD policy and D.C. law, and you have the authority to institute this change. We urge you to do the right thing by making student safety a priority.

A properly trained and equipped police force will not foreclose the possibility of an active shooter. But our focus must be deterrence, prevention, and, as a last resort, interruption, using lethal force if necessary. GUPD currently lacks the resources to achieve any of these safety objectives, demonstrating blatant negligence on the part of university leadership. Local sporting events and political protests are better protected than Georgetown's main campus. More than 96 percent of mass public shootings occurred in gun-free zones from 1998 to 2015, according to the Crime Prevention Research Center. We know that gun-free zones attract violence and create victims.

Taking responsible action should not wait until the completion of another review. In light of recent events, a reasonably prudent person would make sure the campus police department, like virtually every other police department across the country, had properly trained and armed officers. Would any parent or sibling, judge or jury, or anyone with common sense feel otherwise if, God forbid, they have to judge your position following a catastrophe?

We, therefore, respectfully request that you immediately take steps to change the current policy. One approach could be to direct GUPD to work with Metro PD to immediately place armed officers in academic buildings and popular campus locations while training and other measures are undertaken by GUPD to adjust its capabilities.

The time to correct the current dangerous policy is now. Acting the day after a tragedy is too late.