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August 8, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Cardona:

I write to express my concern with the Department of Education's erroneous conclusion that language in the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act* (BSCA) somehow prohibits schools in Maine and across the country from using certain federal education funding for archery and hunter education classes. The BSCA was carefully negotiated on a bipartisan basis, and the Department's interpretation does not align with the letter or spirit of the law.

I was a member of the group of 12 Senators that negotiated the BSCA in the aftermath of several horrific mass shootings. Our goal was to help prevent gun violence while protecting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans. Congress did not intend to reduce the ability for schools to provide healthy and enriching opportunities to students, including archery and hunter education classes. To the contrary, these are precisely the types of offerings that have long supported Maine's culture of responsible gun ownership, and I believe that the Department's misinterpretation of the law will be counterproductive and harmful.

The BSCA provides funding for "activities to support safe and healthy students" under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Section 13401 of the BSCA ensures that such funds will continue to support these opportunities for students, while other sections of the legislation provide funding for school hardening measures and school resource officers. Using the BSCA as a basis to limit educational opportunities for students is unacceptable.

I urge the Department of Education to reconsider its reading of Section 13401 of the BSCA. The Department's current interpretation is inconsistent with congressional intent and limits the ability of our students to pursue the full range of outdoor education opportunities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator