

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Speaker McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader Jeffries, and Minority Leader McConnell,

The National Wildlife Federation is the nation's largest wildlife conservation organization and, in partnership with its nationwide network of conservationists, has been a tireless advocate for America's natural resources since its founding in 1936. For 87 years, the Federation and its affiliates have united Americans to conserve our nation's wildlife and protect the lands and waters they rely on.

Central to the Federation's advocacy for America's lands, waters, and wildlife is our foundational partnership with the hunters and anglers that cherish them, and one of the best ways to inspire and guide the next generation of sportsmen and women are hunter education and archery programs taught in our nation's public schools. For decades, children in communities across the nation have fallen in love with the outdoors through programs that have taught them about wildlife management, firearm and archery safety, and the tradition of conservation that guides and informs these pursuits.

The recent passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) was a critical moment in helping ensure the safety of America's communities, in particular our schools. We appreciate the bipartisan leadership of both the House and Senate to develop and pass this bill that will make our schools and communities safer.

However, language within the BSCA has had the unintended consequence of prohibiting the Department of Education from allowing the use of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding for hunter education, firearm safety, and archery classes in schools. In response, schools across the nation are now faced with the prospect of eliminating these programs and, in turn, cutting children off from vital connections to the outdoors.

The National Wildlife Federation and its affiliates believe this language must be amended by Congress, in partnership with the Biden Administration, as soon as possible to allow hunter education and archery programs to be eligible for ESEA funding once again. We encourage you and your colleagues to develop a bipartisan, durable fix that can be passed as soon as possible, including in must-pass legislation such as a continuing resolution or appropriations omnibus package.

The undersigned organizations stand ready to assist you, your colleagues, and the administration in ensuring the nation's next generation of conservationists are not left behind due to a lapse in funding.

Sincerely,

Alabama Wildlife Federation

Arkansas Wildlife Federation

Arizona Wildlife Federation

Colorado Wildlife Federation

Conservation Coalition of Oklahoma
Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Conservation Federation of Missouri
Conservation Northwest
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Idaho Wildlife Federation
Indiana Wildlife Federation
Iowa Wildlife Federation
Kansas Wildlife Federation
Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Mississippi Wildlife Federation
Montana Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation

Nebraska Wildlife Federation
Nevada Wildlife Federation
New Mexico Wildlife Federation
North Carolina Wildlife Federation
North Dakota Wildlife Federation
Ohio Conservation Federation
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Dakota Wildlife Federation
Tennessee Wildlife Federation
Texas Conservation Alliance
Utah Wildlife Federation
West Virginia Rivers Coalition
Wyoming Wildlife Federation
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation