

A Time For Change

When the adults act like kids and the kids act like adults, change is coming. And when it comes to school safety, it is about damn time. I am a gun owner. I grew up in northern Michigan in a community and family where hunting was a part of our culture. I still hunt, although not nearly as often as I did before having children, and I was proud last Fall when my twelve year old son aced his Hunter's Safety test. The hunting culture I grew up in is not the gun culture that exists in America today. I never had a lockdown drill at school and I never feared for my life when I was at school. The fact that my six year old knows what a lockdown drill is and my fourteen year old fears for her life when an alarm goes off at her school pisses me off. Shame on us adults for letting this get so out of hand.

The kids are not going to let this madness continue. The recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida has created a tipping point, and make no mistake about it, the young people will win. Students across the country are demanding change and not accepting the political posturing of elected officials who have failed to act as school shootings and gun violence continue unchecked. This is becoming a movement, and history shows us that the most important movements in our nation's history have been powered in large part by young people; suffrage, the labor movement, and civil rights to name a few.

Michigan's Children exists to uplift youth voices in policy conversations that matter to their lives, and nothing matters more to young people than their own safety at school, so we're encouraging youth voices to lead the debate on guns in America and collecting stories from young people who want their voice to be heard on the issue of gun violence in their lives. What should the adults in the room know? What kind of a future should our lawmakers be working for? The voices of our youth will lead the way.

The United States is the only developed country in the world that suffers from this level of gun violence, and young people in America have no interest in inheriting a political system that allows that to continue. When the adults act like kids and the kids act like adults, change is coming.

Matt Gillard is the President and CEO of Michigan's Children, the only statewide independent voice working to ensure that public policies are made in the best interest of children from cradle to career, their families and their communities.