

October 13, 2021



ISBA Statement on NSBA Letter to President Biden

The Idaho School Boards Association Executive Board would like to issue a formal response regarding our participation – or, lack thereof - in the National School Boards Association September 29, 2021 request to President Biden for federal intervention regarding threats, intimidation, and harassment towards locally elected school board members.

ISBA was never asked to provide input nor were we informed that the letter was being sent. Despite that, it had the appearance of carrying the endorsement of every state association and its members. Had we been asked, we would have readily pointed out the mischaracterization of parents and patrons in our communities as domestic terrorists who merited federal investigation. We *want* parents and patrons engaged in our public schools – we have sought that for years. ISBA values local control and believes situations that require intervention are better handled by a locally controlled operation close to our communities. While we look for support to our state and federal governments, we do not seek the involvement of federal law enforcement in local decisions.

We would be doing a disservice to our members, however, if we did not point out the disruptive and – at times, frightening – behavior that has shown up in school board meetings in Idaho and across the country. There is no justification for physical or verbal threats directed against school board members, their staff, and certainly not the students. Leadership requires tough decisions and uncomfortable conversations. Serving on a school board is not a popularity contest, and certain decisions are almost guaranteed to be unpopular to some portions of our communities. ISBA was founded on and continues to support the authority of local boards to govern the public schools of this state. Elected officials and appointed leadership who are closest to the community are best suited to make those decisions.

We are all tired. Parents are tired. Teachers and school staff are tired. School board members and administrators are tired. The sooner we recognize that we all want the same thing, the faster we can emerge from divisive tactics and be the leaders our children deserve. Our number one priority is keeping students safely in school and engaged for in-person learning. We call on the citizens of Idaho to exude qualities of leadership – including ethical and civic-minded rhetoric, respect, and the mutual understanding that we're all showing up for the benefit of children in our communities.

"Empower Local Boards for Student Success "