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OP-ED

## *My cousin died in the Parkland shooting, which is why Floridians should elect Charlie Crist / Opinion*

BY SAMUEL SCHWARTZ

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Alex Schachter, a student who was killed in the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018, at a school band performance. *AP*

We are at a breaking point in Florida. Active-shooter drills have become my generation's nuclear "duck and cover" exercises. And while children are still dying in their classrooms, Gov. DeSantis' only concern is with [school safety and mental health](#), while ignoring the real crux of the problem, easy access to weapons of war.

As a student who has been in the public-school system my entire life, I can tell you this is not enough. We need a governor who recognizes that these issues are made more serious when guns are readily accessible, like they are in Florida.

Imagine sitting in English class, learning with your friends and taking notes, only to

be interrupted by a burst of gunfire.

Sadly, this scenario is real, one that that occurred in Parkland four years ago and that [took the life of my cousin Alex](#). It is something that can happen to your child or any other student in Florida.

DeSantis' idea to prevent more "Parklands" was made clear in 2019, when he signed a controversial bill that [arms teachers in classrooms](#). DeSantis wants teachers to be in charge of teaching your children how to read and write — then simultaneously identify and neutralize an attacker wielding an AR-15.

It is possible this has contributed to the large teacher shortage in Florida (8,000 positions). DeSantis' solution is to put [veterans with zero training or experience in the role of a teacher](#).

If the 800% increase in recent sales for [bullet-proof backpacks](#) (that don't even work against AR-15 rounds) is any indication of how afraid parents are that their kids won't make it home from school alive, we need a drastic change in Florida. Parents need more from their governor than political games that put students at more risk of being shot, and U.S. Rep. Charlie Crist is the person to do it.

Crist's "[Freedom To Learn](#)" plan addresses issues that teachers have had for years, like earning proper pay and emphasizing efforts to teach students the warning signs of a potentially dangerous individual.

Crist's plan aims to fix problems, while DeSantis' only creates more of them.

Floridians must ask: When are we going to put our children above the profits of gun manufacturers? If you're DeSantis, the answer is Never.

In fact, DeSantis wants to make it easier to buy a gun. He has been [pushing legislation](#) that will allow for the permitless carry of firearms in the state — a frightening proposal. There would be no training necessary to use a gun, meaning [crime will soar](#). Simply put, more Floridians will die.

On the other hand, Crist supports [common-sense gun laws](#) that will keep children safe in their schools and communities.

Crist also supports a ban on assault weapons, the guns most commonly used in school shootings and [legally purchased](#) in 77% of them. However, this is not a gun grab. All currently owned firearms would be grandfathered in.

Crist would establish an office of gun-violence prevention, to strengthen red-flag and child access prevention laws, reducing suicides and unintentional shootings.

These preventive measures will greatly decrease the amount of mass shootings and gun violence in Florida, whereas DeSantis' Legislature makes these weapons easier to acquire.

With the current increase in gun violence, having a governor that cares about whether we are shot in school and is willing to discuss more than Band-Aid solutions

is what we need now.

This election season, think of students. Think of what you're asking them to go through by allowing guns to be so easily accessed in Florida. If this, in any way concerns you, Charlie Crist deserves your vote.

*Samuel Schwartz's cousin, Alex Schachter, was killed in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting in 2018. He is a member of [Ban Assault Weapons Now](#).*

