

April 6, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman, Appropriations
Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, Appropriations
Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator/Representative:

The undersigned health care, public health, scientific organizations and research universities representing over 1 million members across the country **urge you to end the dramatic chilling effect of the current rider language restricting gun violence research and to fund this critical work at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).**

In 1996, Congress passed the so-called Dickey amendment as a rider to the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education Appropriations bill. The language stated that the CDC could not **fund research that would “advocate or promote gun control,” and the language has remained in** each subsequent annual funding bill. At the same time, Congress cut CDC funding for this research. Although the Dickey amendment does not explicitly prevent research on gun violence, the combination of these two actions has caused a dramatic chilling effect on federal research that has stalled and stymied progress on gathering critical data to inform prevention of gun violence for the past 20 years. Furthermore, it has discouraged the next generation of researchers from entering the field.

Gun violence is a serious public health epidemic resulting in the senseless deaths of an average of 91 Americans, and another 108 gun injuries, each and every day. A central part of preventing future tragedies is through conducting rigorous scientific research as this has been a proven successful approach in reducing deaths due to other injuries.

Health care providers and public health professionals are overwhelmed in emergency departments, clinics, offices, and communities with the victims of mass shootings, homicides, suicides, accidental shootings, and firearm injuries. Medical professionals and our communities work to address the devastating and long-lasting physical and emotional effects of gun violence on victims, their families and their friends, but are hampered by the insufficient body of evidence-based research to use to point communities toward proven gun violence prevention programs and policies.

Former Representative Jay Dickey (R-AR), author of the current language that has effectively **restricted gun violence research, recently noted that, “it is my position that somehow or** someway we should slowly but methodically fund [gun] research until a solution is reached. **Doing nothing is no longer an acceptable solution.”**

Here are some of the critical questions that enhanced research would help us answer:

- 1) **What is the best way to protect toddlers from accidentally firing a firearm?** Safe firearm storage works, but what kinds of campaigns best encourage safe storage? What safe storage methods are the most effective and most likely to be adopted? What should be the trigger pull on a firearm so **a toddler can't use it?**
- 2) **What are the most effective ways to prevent gun-related suicides?** Two-thirds of firearm related deaths are suicides. Are firearm suicides more spontaneous than non-firearm suicides? Do other risk factors vary by method? How do we prevent it in different populations—active military, veterans, those with mental illness, law enforcement or correctional officers, the elderly, or teenagers?
- 3) **What is the impact of the variety of state policies being enacted?** How are different policies around safe storage, mental health, public education, and background checks impacting firearm injuries and deaths?

The CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control is an important part of answering these types of questions. Public health uniquely brings together a comprehensive approach connecting the complex factors that result in violence and injuries including clinical, social, criminal, mental health, and environmental factors.

The impact of federal public health research in reducing deaths from car accidents, smoking and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome has been well proven. Decades ago, we did not know infant car seats should be rear-facing. Robust research on car accidents and subsequent legislation has helped save hundreds of thousands of lives without preventing people from being able to drive. **It's time to apply the same approach to reducing gun violence in our communities.**

As professionals dedicated to the health of the nation and to the application of sound science to improving the lives of our fellow Americans, we urge you to take action this year. Americans deserve to know that we are working with the best tools and information in the fight to reduce gun violence deaths and injuries.

As Congress works to craft the FY 2017 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, we urge you to provide the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with funding for research into the causes and prevention of gun violence.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to improve health and protect the safety of all Americans.

Sincerely,

Academic Consortium for Integrative Medicine & Health
Academic Pediatric Association

Alameda Health System Department of Emergency Medicine
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Emergency Physicians, California Chapter
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American College of Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Educational Research Association
American Geriatrics Society
American Medical Association
American Medical Student Association
American Medical Women's Association
American Pediatric Society
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society of Hematology
American Thoracic Society
American Trauma Society
Arkansas Public Health Association
Asociación de Salud Pública de Puerto Rico
Association for Psychological Science
Association of American Universities
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Big Cities Health Coalition
Boulder County Public Health
Brigham Psychiatric Specialties
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
California Public Health Association-North
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists
Central Oregon Medical Society
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis
Chicago chapter Physicians for Social Responsibility
Colorado Public Health Association
Committee of Interns and Residents/SEIU Healthcare
Congregation Gates of Heaven

Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Cure Violence
Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association
Doctors Council SEIU
Doctors for America
Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Florida Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.
Futures Without Violence
Georgia Public Health Association
Hawaii Public Health Association
Health Officers Association of California
Houston Health Department
Illinois Public Health Association
International Society for Developmental Psychobiology
Iowa Chapter Physicians for Social Responsibility
Iowa Public Health Association
JPS Health Network
Kansas Public Health Association
Koop Institute
KU Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health
Law and Society Association
Lee County Health Department
Local Public Health Association of Minnesota
Louisiana Center for Health Equity
Maine Public Health Association
Maryland Academy of Family Physicians
Minnesota Public Health Association
Montana Public Health Association
National AHEC Organization
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Medical Examiners
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Black Nurses Association
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Physicians Alliance
National Violence Prevention Network
Nevada Public Health Association

New Hampshire Public Health Association
New Mexico Public Health Association
North Carolina Public Health Association
Ohio Public Health Association
Ohio Public Health Association
Oregon Academy of Family Physicians
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Oregon Public Health Association
Pediatric Policy Council
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Arizona Chapter
Physicians for a National Health Program NY Metro Chapter
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Physicians for Social Responsibility / Northeast Ohio
Physicians for Social Responsibility Wisconsin
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Arizona Chapter
Physicians for Social Responsibility/New York
Physicians for the Prevention of Gun Violence
Population Association of America
Prevention Institute
Psychonomic Society
Public Health Association of Nebraska
Public Health Association of New York City
Public Health Institute
Research!America
RiverStone Health
Safe States Alliance
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter, Physicians for Social Responsibility
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
Society for Mathematical Psychology
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Psychophysiological Research
Society for Public Health Education
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
Society of General Internal Medicine
Southern California Public Health Association
Southwest Ohio Society of Family Medicine
Student National Medical Association
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
Texas Doctors for Social Responsibility
Texas Public Health Association
Trauma Foundation
Tri-County Health Department
Trust for America's Health

United Physicians of Newtown
Vermont Public Health Association
Virginia Public Health Association
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Washington State Public Health Association
Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo
Whiteside County Health Department

cc:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Paul Ryan
The Honorable Harry Reid
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Members of Congress