



June 17, 2016

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

Once again, the nation is confronted with the tragedy of the sudden, massive destruction of our fellow citizens. This time, it involves at least 49 killed at a gay night club in Orlando. Previously, it has been worshippers at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina; students at Virginia Tech; children at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut; movie goers at Aurora, Colorado; and government workers at San Bernadino, California.

There is no single answer to the prevention of this kind of violence. It will take improvements and changes to our systems of mental health, law enforcement, even foreign intelligence. In many cases, before we can even recommend what to do, we need better information about causes and treatments. That is why more than a year ago, in an [article](#) in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, the AAFP joined other physician organizations and the American Bar Association in a call for, among other things, investment in federal funding for research on gun-related violence. As noted in this article, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and National Institute of Justice should receive adequate funding to study the effect of gun violence and unintentional gun-related injury on public health and safety.

In addition, part of our response to the violence of Orlando and elsewhere reasonably should include a careful consideration of who has access to the destructive firearms that are necessary to wreak such havoc. The policies of the AAFP support the effort to close the so-called “gun show loophole” that your proposed legislation, the *Fix Gun Checks Act* (S 2934), is designed to do. For example, the AAFP policy on the Prevention of Gun Violence states:

*The federal requirement for an on-site background check should ensure that those who have been convicted of a violent criminal offense and those who have been involuntarily committed to a mental institution or otherwise adjudicated to be suffering a severe mental condition posing a danger to others or themselves are not able to purchase firearms. Therefore, this background-check requirement should be expanded to include the sale of firearms at gun shows, over the Internet and in classified ads. Reasonable exceptions from the background check requirement should be allowed for sales between immediate family members if the seller does not know or have reasonable cause to*

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*believe that the purchaser is prohibited from receiving or possessing a firearm under federal, state, or local law.*

We appreciate your leadership in helping reduce the likelihood of these terrible crimes by your legislation to improve the national system of background checks for gun purchases and to apply the requirement for background checks to the purchase of guns in all venues. It is not the solution to the prevalence of gun violence, but it is an important part of that solution. There is much more to be done, and the AAFP is committed to working with Congress in this very important effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Wergin MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "W".

Robert Wergin, MD, FAAFP  
Board Chair