

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