



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
STRONG MEDICINE FOR AMERICA

January 17, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents over 105,000 family physicians nationwide, thanks you for your leadership in advancing a national conversation on gun violence and ways we can reduce, if not eliminate, gun-related tragedies. The causes of this problem are complex and there is no easy solution. Family physicians focus daily on prevention as a means of improving the health of our patients. It is now time that we devote the necessary time and resources to help our country focus on prevention programs that address all causes of violence in our communities.

The AAFP has long-standing policies approved by our Congress of Delegates that are closely aligned with proposals included in the “President’s Plan to Protect our Children and our Communities by Reducing Gun Violence.” As physicians, we strongly support your executive order clarifying that no federal law shall be construed to restrict the patient-physician relationship and prevent physicians from discussing gun ownership and gun safety with their patients. We must now work to ensure that state laws preventing such communications are repealed.

The AAFP agrees that gun and other types of violence are public health issues and support the allocation of the appropriate resources to study the causes and effects of gun violence. We applaud your actions to end the freeze on gun-related violence research and data collection at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The collection and analysis of data will allow us to identify potential causes of such violent acts and target our collective efforts in the most impactful manner.

While we recognize that guns are not the only source of violence, we share your belief that gun safety is an essential component of our national conversation on this issue and must be a part of the solution. The AAFP has long-standing policy supporting trigger locks, safe storage requirements, and we oppose the individual ownership of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. We also support efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of regulations, interventions, and strategies for preventing injuries and fatalities caused by firearms.

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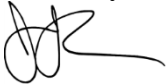
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Finally, we thank you for identifying ways we can improve mental health services in our health care systems. The AAFP agrees that more attention must be devoted to identifying mental illness and providing the appropriate treatments to those diagnosed. We believe that family physicians, through new delivery models such as the patient-centered medical home, are well positioned to assist in enhancing access to mental health services.

The AAFP pledges to work with you, Vice President Biden, and Congress to identify and promote policies that prevent future acts of violence against our fellow citizens. We are committed to doing our part to provide our members with the best information and resources that empower them to be a part of a national strategy and solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Cain, MD
President

C: The Honorable Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States
The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services