



February 26, 2019

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thompson:

On behalf of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), which represents 131,400 family physicians and medical students across the country, I write to express the AAFP's support for the *Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (HR 8)*. This common-sense legislation protects the constitutional rights of law-abiding Americans while seeking to prevent felons, domestic abusers and the mentally ill from lawfully purchasing a firearm.

The AAFP recognizes firearm-related deaths, injury and violence as a significant public health problem and supports primary prevention strategies to address this issue. As physicians, we see first-hand the devastating consequences of violence to victims and their families. Our organization believes that federal and state policies can balance the right to own firearms with health, safety, and societal well-being. For example, the AAFP believes appropriate gun violence research funding and public health surveillance are essential prevention strategies. In addition, family physicians oppose state "gag rule" bills that aim to discourage doctor-patient communication regarding the risks of firearms ownership.

The federal National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) requires federally-licensed gun sellers to conduct background checks for each purchase. Strengthening the federal NICS background checks system is an essential strategy for preventing weapons from getting into the hands of those who might be at risk for hurting themselves or others. Your legislation, while providing reasonable exceptions for transfers between family members, members of the military and law enforcement, will help achieve this goal.

We congratulate you for crafting a bipartisan approach to expanding background checks. We stand ready to work with you to support policies that reduce firearms injuries and death. If you have any additional questions about the AAFP's views, please have your staff contact Robert Hall, Director of Government Relations, at RHall@aafp.org or 202-655-49012.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Munger, MD, FAAFP
Board Chair

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