

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 22, 2018

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Leader Pelosi:

Last month, 17 people, including 14 students, were killed in a mass shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Sadly, this is not at all a new problem for our nation. Since 1999, approximately 150,000 students have attended primary or secondary schools with incidents of gun violence.¹ While gun violence in schools is tragic, the underlying problem is much broader. More than 35,000 people, including nearly 3,000 children, die from gun violence each year in the United States.² A recent study published in the American Journal of Medicine indicates that in high-income nations, an astounding 91 percent of children younger than 15 who were killed by bullets lived in the United States.³ Additionally, the presence of a gun during a domestic violence incident makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed.⁴

Gun violence knows no barriers. The shooting in Parkland was just the latest in a surge of mass shootings in places as diverse as a country music concert in Las Vegas, a LGBTQ nightclub in Orlando, and an African American Church in Charleston, SC. All people can be affected by this violence, but is particularly felt in low-income and racial and ethnic minority communities. African American, Hispanic, and American Indian boys are all significantly more likely than are white children to be killed by gun violence.⁵ While the numbers are staggering, there is far too little data about the causes, effects, and prevention of gun violence in the United States. In large part, this due to an effective ban on federally-funded research into gun violence. **It is past time for that ban to end.**

The health care community recognizes gun violence as a severe threat to the health of our nation. The over 170 undersigned organizations represent health care consumers, patients, providers, and other stakeholders. As organizations focused on improving peoples' health and well-being, many of us have not engaged in the vigorous national debate on gun violence. We are entering that debate today because our nation is at a turning point. Fed up with excuses for why policy makers cannot do anything to stop gun violence, the American people, and the health care community are demanding action.

¹ Strauss, V. (2018, February 20). How mass school shootings affect the education of students who survive. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/02/20/how-mass-school-shootings-affect-the-education-of-students-who-survive/?utm_term=.aaeb82eebbc1

² Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <http://www.bradiycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics>

³ Grinshteyn, Erin & Hemenway, David. (2015). Violent Death Rates: The United States Compared to Other High-Income OECD Countries, 2010. *The American Journal of Medicine*. 129. 10.1016/j.amjmed.2015.10.025

⁴ Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J. et al. (2003). Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study. *American journal of public health*, 93(7), 1089-1097.

⁵ Fowler KA, Dahlberg LL, Haileyesus T, et al. Childhood Firearm Injuries in the United States. *Pediatrics*. 2017;140(1):e20163486

As health care policy experts and advocates, we know that effective policy relies on rigorous and impartial research. Despite gun violence being a leading cause of death for children, in 1996 Congress forbade any funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that “may be used to advocate or promote gun control.” This provision – known as the “Dickey Amendment” – has effectively stifled meaningful federal funding for research on the causes and effects gun violence. A recent study found that “in relation to mortality rates, gun violence research was the least-researched cause of death.”⁶ Even former-Representative Dickey (R-AR) who led the effort to ban this research has reversed his position because “doing nothing is no longer an acceptable solution.”⁷

Across the country, students are rallying to urge policy makers to take action against gun violence. They are asking adults to enact policies to stem the rising tide of gun violence against children. There are many policies that Congress should enact to protect young people and all Americans against violence, and the health care community is united in calling for the end of one of these policy that is clearly indefensible. **We urge Congress to act swiftly to repeal the Dickey Amendment and fund research into the causes, effects, and evidence-based prevention of gun violence in our communities.**

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

Families USA
AcademyHealth
African American Ministers In Action
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
Alliance of Baptists
American Academy of Nursing
American Civil Liberties Union
American Conference of Cantors
American Federation of Teachers
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Nurses Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Center for Medicare Advocacy
Center for Urban and Racial Equity
Children's Firearm Safety Alliance
Children's Home Society of America
Coalition for Disability Health Equity
Coalition on Human Needs
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence
Committee of Interns and Residents
Community Catalyst
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

⁶ Stark DE, Shah NH. Funding and Publication of Research on Gun Violence and Other Leading Causes of Death. *JAMA*. 2017;317(1):84–85. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.16215

⁷ Diamond, J. “Former GOP congressman flips on support for gun violence research,” *CNNPolitics*. December 3, 2015. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/02/politics/jay-dickey-gun-violence-research/index.html>

Doctors for America
First Focus
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
GLMA: Health Professionals Advancing LGBT Equality
Human Rights Campaign
Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved
Justice in Aging
Latino Commission on AIDS
League of Women Voters of the United States
McNary Group
Men of Reform Judaism
Mi Familia Vota
MomsRising.org
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Consumers League
National Council of Jewish Women
National Education Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Health Law Program
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Physicians Alliance
National Respite Coalition
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
NFTY – The Reform Jewish Youth Movement
Organizing for Action
Peace Village Projects, Inc
People Demanding Action
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Progressive Doctors
Psychiatrists for Gun Violence Prevention
Raising Women's Voices for the Health Care We Need
School-Based Health Alliance
Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Sisters of Charity, BVM
Society for Public Health Education

States United to Prevent Gun Violence
The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
TimeBanks USA
Tribal Development Gospel Association
Trinity Health, Livonia, MI
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
Universal Health Care Action Network
Women of Reform Judaism
Youth Progressive Action Catalyst
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE

State and Local Organizations:

Alaska

Alaska Children's Trust

Arizona

Arizonans for Gun Safety

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families

California

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Claremont Graduate University
County Health Executives Association of California
Equality California
San Francisco AIDS Foundation

Colorado

Colorado Ceasefire
Colorado Children's Campaign

Connecticut

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut

Delaware

Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence

District of Columbia

DC Coalition on Long Term Care
Herd on the Hill

Florida

Humanex, Inc
Organize Florida

Georgia

Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta
Health Students Taking Action Together (HSTAT)

Illinois

AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice
Chicago Council of Lawyers
Community Renewal Society
Esperanza Health Centers
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Strengthening Chicago's Youth
The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law

Indiana

Hoosiers Concerned About Gun Violence

Iowa

Beckett Family Consulting

Kansas

Health Reform Resource Project

Kentucky

Kentucky Equal Justice Center
Kentucky Voices for Health

Louisiana

Louisiana Violence Reduction Coalition

Maine

Maine Children's Alliance
Maine Gun Safety Coalition
Tri-County Mental Health Services

Maryland

Doctors for America in Maryland
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
Maryland Public Health Association
Mental Health Association of Maryland

Massachusetts

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

Michigan

Michigan League for Public Policy

Physicians for the Prevention of Gun Violence

Minnesota

North Homes Children and Family Services

Mississippi

Back Bay Mission

Nebraska

Doctors for America - Nebraska

League of Women Voters of Nebraska

Sisters of Mercy West Midwest Justice Team

New Mexico

Health Action New Mexico

New Mexico Voices for Children

Southwest Center for Health Innovation

New York

Health Care Advocacy

Hispanic Health Network

Manhattan Central Medical Society, a local affiliate of the National Medical Association

NAMI Huntington

National Physicians Alliance - NY Chapter

New York Doctors

New York State Pediatric Advocacy Coalition

North Carolina

NC Child

North Carolina Justice Center

Working America NC

Ohio

Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Pennsylvania

Art As Social Inquiry

Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Saint Monica Eldercare Program

South Carolina

Healthcare Issue Team of Low Country Indivisible
National Association of Social Workers, SC Chapter
SC Synod of the ELCA
Sea Islands Action Network
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
South Carolina Christian Action Council
The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network

Tennessee

Safe Tennessee Project
Tennessee Health Care Campaign

Texas

Centro San Vicente
Children's Defense Fund - Texas
Texas Gun Sense

Utah

Gun Violence Prevention Center of Utah
Voices for Utah Children

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children

Virginia

Virginia Organizing

Washington

CVCH
Foundation for Healthy Generations
Northwest Health Law Advocates
University of Washington
Washington Coalition to Protect our Patients
Health Equity Circle at University of Washington

West Virginia

AIDS Task Force of the Upper Ohio Valley

Wisconsin

Kids Forward
Wisconsin Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals

Wyoming

Healthy Wyoming