

July 10, 2013

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
503 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
304 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chair, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
354 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Harkin, and Ranking Member Moran:

As a diverse group of health professionals, public health, and child advocacy organizations, we write to applaud the Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee's inclusions of \$10 million in FY 2014 to support research investments to address the public health crisis of gun violence.

**We urge the full Senate Appropriations Committee to support at least \$10 million within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in FY 2014 along with sufficient new funding at the National Institutes of Health to support research into the causes and prevention of gun violence. Furthermore, we urge Members to oppose any efforts to reduce, eliminate, or condition CDC funding related to gun violence prevention research.**

The dearth of gun violence research has contributed to the lack of meaningful progress in reducing firearm injuries. Firearm injuries are one of the top three causes of death among youth<sup>i</sup>. The U.S. has one of the highest rates of injuries, suicides and homicides among developed countries. While the rate of gun-related deaths is down from a high of 15 per 100,000 in the mid-1990s, it has subsequently plateaued since 2000 at 10 per 100,000 and has remained steady<sup>ii</sup>. Furthermore, it is estimated that the national rate of gun deaths will surpass the rate of motor vehicle accident-related deaths within the next two years<sup>iii</sup>. In several states, such as Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Oregon, the rate of gun deaths has already met or exceeded traffic-related deaths<sup>iv</sup>. This is significant because motor vehicle accidents are one of the top two leading causes of unintentional injury deaths, which is the number one cause of death among individuals younger than 45<sup>v</sup>.

Research can contribute to fewer lives lost, reductions in injuries and changes in social norms. Federal infrastructures already exist to establish prevention and harm reduction strategies. Since the 1950s, a research-based public health approach has translated extensive research into prevention and systems change and contributed to an 80 percent reduction in motor vehicle fatalities per mile driven<sup>vi</sup>. Significant research investments could address these issues by helping provide a more accurate understanding of the problems associated with gun violence and to determine how best to reduce the high rate of firearm-related deaths and injuries. Unfortunately, in 1996 Congress eliminated funding for CDC research on gun violence and accompanied the cut with language barring any research that would "advocate or promote gun control." The research limitations have also drastically limited the workforce of researchers dedicated to gun violence prevention. It is estimated that fewer than 20 academics in the U.S. currently focus on gun violence<sup>vii</sup>.

On June 5, the Institute of Medicine released a [report](#) outlining a research agenda for addressing firearm-related injuries and deaths as a public health issue. The report highlights five key areas for research on this topic: characteristics of firearm violence; risk and protective factors; firearm violence prevention and other interventions; the impact of gun safety technology; and video games and other media. The IOM's report notes that this agenda would be essential in supporting the development of policies to reduce the public health impact of firearms in the same manner as approaches that have found success in other areas, such as motor vehicle safety.

Funding at both CDC and NIH would be an important step toward realizing a robust research agenda and developing public health interventions that could protect children and keep them safe from gun violence. **We urge the Senate Appropriations Committee to provide \$10 million in new funding in FY 2014 to support the president's recommendation for CDC research on the causes and prevention of gun violence, along with sufficient new funding at the National Institutes of Health to further advance this critical research. We also urge Members to oppose any efforts to reduce, eliminate, or condition CDC funding related to gun violence prevention research.**

As Congress moves forward with the FY 2014 appropriations process, we welcome the opportunity to work with you on ways to reduce injuries and keep communities safe. For more information, please contact Sonya Clay at 202-347-8600.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Medical Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Trauma Society  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and its Million Mom March and Brady Chapters  
Center to Prevent Youth Violence  
Children's Defense Fund  
Futures Without Violence  
Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators  
National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence  
National Child Abuse Coalition  
National Violence Prevention Network  
Prevention Institute  
Safe States Alliance  
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research  
Trust For America's Health  
Voices for America's Children

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<sup>i</sup> WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars).

<sup>ii</sup> Wadman, Meredith. *The Gun Fighter*. Nature. Vol. 496. April 25, 2013.

<sup>iii</sup> Christoff, Chris and Kolet, Ilan. American Gun Deaths to Exceed Traffic Fatalities by 2015. Bloomberg Government. December 19, 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-12-19/american-gun-deaths-to-exceed-traffic-fatalities-by-2015.html>

<sup>iv</sup> USA Today, Death rates from guns, traffic accidents converging, January 9, 2013, accessed online at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/01/09/guns-traffic-deaths-rates/1784595/>

<sup>v</sup> WISQARS (Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System). Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars).

<sup>vi</sup> Hemenway, David and Miller, Matthew. *Public Health Approach to the Prevention of Gun Violence*. New England Journal of Medicine. May 23, 2013. 368; 21.

<sup>vii</sup> Wadman, Meredith. *The Gun Fighter*. Nature. Vol. 496. April 25, 2013.