

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the presence of a gun during a domestic violence incident makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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)

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

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.”<sup>7</sup>

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)

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<sup>6</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> 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