

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2017

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor,
HHS, Education
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

We write to request the inclusion of \$10 million in the Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct scientific research on the causes and prevention of gun violence in the United States.

Tragic mass shootings in Orlando, Charleston, Chattanooga, Colorado Springs, San Bernardino, and too many other cities have sent shockwaves across our nation. Every day, almost 100 Americans are killed by gun violence.¹ Every year, another nearly 81,000 suffer injuries from gun violence.² But policymakers, healthcare practitioners, and researchers lack comprehensive, scientific information about the causes and characteristics of gun violence, or the best strategies to prevent future tragedies.

The principal reason for this is that, since 1996, Congress has included an annual appropriations rider prohibiting the CDC from lobbying for gun control. Specifically, the rider provides that none of the funds made available to the CDC may be used “to advocate or promote gun control.”³ Unfortunately, some have misconstrued this rider not as a ban on supporting legislative efforts to limit access to firearms, but as a ban on supporting scientific research into the causes of gun violence. If the rider is included again this year — which we urge against — it should not be permitted to stand in the way of funding CDC gun-violence research.

Before his untimely death last month, the author of the original rider, former Representative Jay Dickey (R-AR), had changed his views, supported funding CDC gun-violence research, and believed that the rider should not impede it. As Representative Dickey and Mark Rosenberg, Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC from 1994 to 1999, opined together: “Both of us now believe strongly that federal funding for research into gun-violence prevention should be

¹ <http://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-by-the-numbers/#DailyDeaths>

² http://www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Brady-Campaign-5Year-Gun-Deaths-Fact-Sheet_May2017.pdf

³ P.L. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-244 (Sept. 30, 1996).

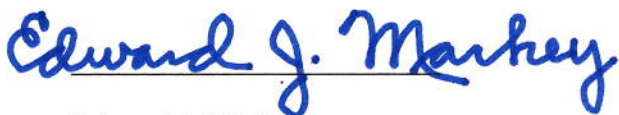
dramatically increased. . . . However, it is also important for all to understand that [the rider's] wording does not constitute an outright ban on federal gun-violence prevention research. It is critical that the appropriation contain enough money to let science thrive and help us determine what works."⁴

In 2013, the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (IOM/NRC) issued a report that identified research priorities for a better understanding of gun violence as a public-health problem, including research on the causes of gun violence, health burdens, and potential interventions.⁵ Dedicated funding in the amount of \$10 million will allow the CDC to begin this important initiative.

We must take this important step because only the United States government is in a position to establish an integrated public-health research agenda to understand the causes of gun violence and identify the most effective strategies for prevention.

We thank you for your consideration of this important request and once again urge your support for gun-violence prevention research at the CDC.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey



Richard Blumenthal



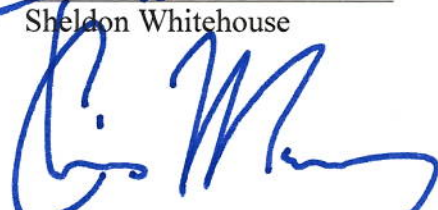
Richard J. Durbin



Sheldon Whitehouse



Kirsten Gillibrand




Christopher S. Murphy

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/time-for-collaboration-on-gun-research/2015/12/25/f989cd1a-a819-11e5-bff5-905b92f5f94b_story.html.

⁵ <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/reports/2013/priorities-for-research-to-reduce-the-threat-of-firearm-related-violence.aspx>.


Tom Carper


Robert P. Casey



Dianne Feinstein


Sherrod Brown


Brian Schatz


Christopher A. Coons


Robert Menendez


Tammy Duckworth



Bernard Sanders


Chris Van Hollen


Tammy Baldwin


Ron Wyden


Elizabeth Warren


Jack Reed