

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Departments of
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Departments of
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
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 2017 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.

In 2015, there were 372 mass shootings in the United States. Tragedies in Charleston, Chattanooga, Colorado Springs, San Bernardino, and too many other cities have sent shockwaves across our nation. We are now losing more than 33,000 lives annually to gun violence;[1] another 76,000 people suffer from gun-violence-related injuries each year.[2] Yet policymakers, healthcare practitioners, researchers, and others 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.

Even the author of the original rider, former Representative Jay Dickey (R-AR), now supports funding CDC gun-violence research and believes 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, have opined together: “Both of us now believe strongly that federal funding for research into gun-

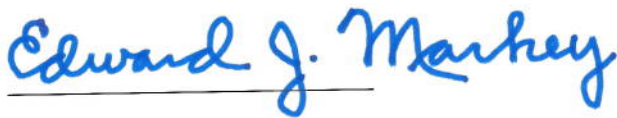
violence prevention should be dramatically increased. . . . However, it is also important for all to understand that [the rider's] wording does not constitute an outright ban on federal gun-violence prevention research. It is critical that the appropriation contain enough money to let science thrive 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 — the amount requested in the President’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget — 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



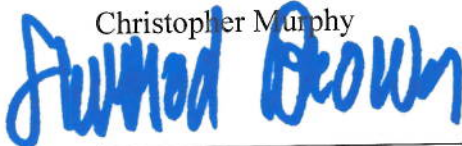
Charles E. Schumer



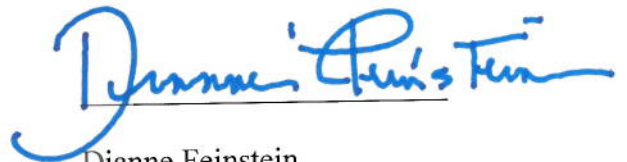
Richard Blumenthal



Christopher Murphy



Sherrod Brown



Dianne Feinstein



Jack Reed



Kirsten Gillibrand

Benjamin F. Cardin

Benjamin Cardin

Deck Durbin

Richard J. Durbin

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren

Robert Menendez

Robert Menendez

Brian Schatz

Brian Schatz

Barbara Boxer

Barbara Boxer

Mazie Hirono

Mazie K. Hirono

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders

Ron Wyden

Ron Wyden

cc: The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman,
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member,
Senate Committee on Appropriations

[1] <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/injury.htm>.

[2] <http://www.bradycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Gun-Death-Injury-Stat-Sheet-5-Year-Average-2013-Updates-Jan-2015.pdf>.

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

[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>.