

April 14, 2016

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

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Reid, Speaker Ryan, Leader Pelosi, and Members of the United States Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives,

We write to you today at the conclusion of National Public Health Week, an occasion dedicated to improving the health and quality of life of all Americans. It is in this spirit that we urge Congress to invest in federal research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) into gun violence, one of our nation's leading public health challenges and one that impacts all of our communities.

As you know, gun violence takes the lives of 33,000 Americans each year¹ and for every person killed, two more are injured.² Whether gun violence is in the form of a domestic violence homicide, suicide, unintentional shooting, gang-related killing, or mass shooting, the tragedy affects the entire community. In 2010 alone, gun violence cost the United States \$174 billion.³ Gun violence is a public health crisis that demands a national public health response.

Due to a restrictive budget amendment put into place by Congress, since 1996 federal investments into gun violence research have effectively been frozen. Although President Obama lifted the ban on such research in 2012, Congress has yet to dedicate the necessary resources to study the causes and costs of firearms violence and related injuries.

The CDC has made life-saving progress in tackling other public health challenges-identifying risk factors and disseminating prevention policies for motor vehicle crashes,

¹ Nat'l Ctr. for Injury Prevention & Control, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Web-Based Injury Statistics Query & Reporting System (WISQARS), Injury Mortality Reports, 1999-2010, for National, Regional, and States* (Dec. 2012), http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/dataRestriction_inj.html.

² Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Gun Violence Statistics. November 18 2012. <http://smartgunlaws.org/category/gun-studies-statistics/gun-violence-statistics/>.

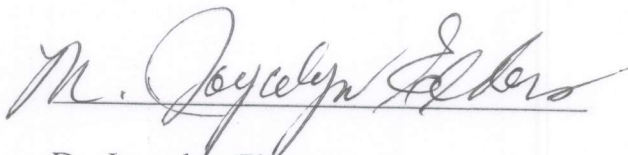
³ Children's Safety Network Economics and Data Analysis Resource Center at Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, *The Cost of Firearm Violence*. TR Miller, data analyst. From American Association of Public Health, *Gun Violence Prevention*, https://www.apha.org/~media/files/pdf/factsheets/gun_violence_prevention.ashx

which caused automobile deaths to fall from over 41,000 in 1997⁴ to just over 30,000 in 2013.⁵ Gun deaths, on the other hand, outpaced motor vehicle deaths in 21 states and the District of Columbia in 2014 alone.⁶

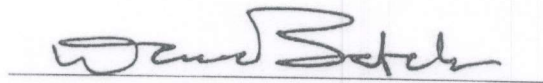
As former Surgeons General, we know that saving Americans' lives requires that we fully understand the scope and causes of gun violence. The CDC is the nation's premier institution of public health and can make significant strides by conducting evidence-based, data-driven research into gun violence. It is only through research that we can begin to address this menace to our nation's public health. We urge you to fund CDC research into gun violence to better the health and safety of all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

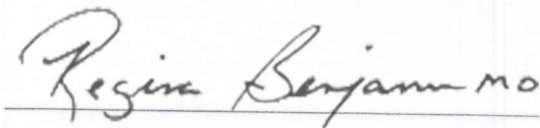
Sincerely,



Dr. Joycelyn Elders
U.S. Surgeon General, 1993-1994



Dr. David Satcher
U.S. Surgeon General, 1998-2002



Dr. Regina Benjamin
U.S. Surgeon General, 2009-2013

⁴ National Safety Council. Accident facts, 1998 edition. Itasca, Illinois: National Safety Council, 1998. From Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention & Control, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Achievements in Public Health, 1990-1999 Motor-Vehicle Safety: A 20th Century Public Health Accomplishment." <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm4818a1.htm>

⁵ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, *Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) Encyclopedia, General*. <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/Main/index.aspx>.

⁶ Violence Policy Center, "Gun Deaths Compared to Motor Vehicle Deaths." 2015. <http://www.vpc.org/regulating-the-gun-industry/gun-deaths-compared-to-motor-vehicle-deaths/>