

April XX, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Granger, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the undersigned _____ national, state, and local medical, public health, and research organizations write to ask you to **provide \$35 million for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), \$25 million for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and \$1 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to conduct public health research into firearm morbidity and mortality prevention.** We also encourage Congress to explore opportunities for building out and further supporting this research at all other appropriate agencies, to ensure that federally funded research can explore the full scope of this public health issue. A rigorous 2021 report estimated that the federal government will need to spend approximately \$100 million per year to fully fund a comprehensive research agenda on reducing gun violence.¹

Across this country, communities are suffering from preventable firearm-related injuries and deaths. Suicide, violent crime, and accidental shootings cause trauma to families, communities, and children affected by these preventable tragedies. In 2021, the most recent year for which we have data, firearm-related injuries led to 47,286 total fatalities.² The overall U.S. firearm homicide and firearm suicide rates in 2021 were the highest documented since 1993 and 1990, respectively.³

We need a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to reducing firearm-related suicides, violent crime, and accidental shootings. Rigorous prevention research that can accurately quantify and describe the roots of gun violence, inform strategies for responsible gun owners to avoid preventable injuries and deaths, and identify non-partisan opportunities for reducing the related morbidity and mortality is the foundation of such an approach.

We would like to thank Congress for its continued support for this public health research in FY23, providing \$12.5 million each to the CDC and NIH for the fourth consecutive fiscal year, and for the new \$1 million in funding for the NIJ. These initial investments are a crucial step toward applying a public health approach to increasing gun safety and reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths, and we are excited to see these funds contributing to important research projects that are now underway. The CDC has made 22 awards for two- and three-year projects to improve scientific understanding of firearm-related violence and to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of prevention strategies.⁴ Several of these projects will conclude this year and provide insights on how to reduce suicide risk in U.S. Army soldiers and veterans, how to

improve efforts to reduce urban firearm injuries, and the relationship between firearm access and opioid-related harm on firearm suicide risk, among other topics. The NIH is funding research on the determinants of firearm injury, the identification of those at risk, and the evaluation of innovative interventions.^{5,6,7}

These initial investments are important, but increased funding is still needed to overcome the decades-long lack of federal funding that set back our nation's response to the public health issue of firearm-related morbidity and mortality. The agencies have received many more quality proposals than they are able to fund, and additional funding can generate research into important issues, such as the best ways to prevent unintended firearm injuries and fatalities among women and children; the most effective methods to prevent firearm-related suicides; the measures that can best prevent the next shooting at a school or public place; and numerous other vital public health questions.

Our groups strongly urge Congress to increase the funding level to \$35 million for the CDC, \$25 million for the NIH, and \$1 million for the NIJ for firearm morbidity and mortality prevention research as part of FY 2024 appropriations. Continued and expanded funding could support the creation of additional, large, multi-year studies and accelerate the rebuilding of a research community that shrank in the decades before Congress restored this federal funding. Robust and sustained research on motor vehicle crashes and subsequent legislation has helped save hundreds of thousands of lives through public health interventions, including seat belts and other safety features. The same approach can help reduce firearm-related injuries in our communities, including ensuring that the CDC, NIH, and NIJ are able to adequately fund non-biased, evidence-based research into this public health priority. Exploring additional agencies to fund for this work would also ensure this research can address all necessary areas of inquiry and move us closer to the approximately \$100 million necessary annually to fully support this research field.

Our organizations stand ready to work with you to support this critical effort. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

State and Local Organizations:

¹ Health Management Associates. Cost Estimate of Federal Funding for Gun Violence Research and Data Infrastructure. <https://assets.joycefdn.org/content/uploads/CostEstimateofFederalFundingforGunViolenceResearch.pdf>. Report prepared for Arnold Ventures and the Joyce Foundations. Published July 13, 2021.

² Thomas R. Simon, et al. "Notes from the Field: Increases in Firearm Homicide and Suicide Rates – United States, 2020-2021." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7140a4>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Firearm Violence Prevention: Funded Research. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/funded-research.html>.

⁵ National Institutes of Health, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. NIH awards grants for firearm injury and mortality prevention research. September 30, 2020. Available at: <https://obssr.od.nih.gov/nih-awards-grants-for-firearm-injury-and-mortality-prevention-research/>.

⁶ National Institutes of Health, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. NIH awards 10 grants addressing firearm violence prevention. September 17, 2021. Available at: <https://obssr.od.nih.gov/news-and-events/news/director-voice/nih-awards-10-grants-addressing-firearm-violence-prevention>.

⁷ National Institutes of Health, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. NIH Research to Prevent Firearm Injury and Mortality. September 15, 2022. Available at: <https://obssr.od.nih.gov/news-and-events/news/nih-research-prevent-firearm-injury-and-mortality>.