Dear Chairmen Shelby and Blunt, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Murray:

As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, the undersigned 166 national, state, and local medical, public health, and research organizations write to ask you to provide $50 million in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct public health research into firearm morbidity and mortality prevention.

In 2017, there were over 39,000 U.S. firearm-related fatalities. Federally funded public health research has a proven track record of reducing public health-related deaths, whether from motor vehicle crashes, smoking, or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. This same approach should be applied to increasing gun safety and reducing firearm-related injuries and deaths, and CDC research will be as critical to that effort as it was to these previous public health achievements. The foundation of a public health approach is rigorous research that can accurately quantify and describe the facets of an issue and identify opportunities for reducing its related morbidity and mortality.

We were heartened by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar’s February 2018 comments clarifying that the Dickey Amendment does not prohibit CDC from funding gun violence prevention research. As you know, the Dickey Amendment was a 1996 amendment to a federal spending bill indicating that the CDC could not advocate for or promote gun control. This language created a chilling effect on public health research on firearm morbidity and mortality prevention at the federal level. Despite the amendment sponsor’s later statement that he never intended to undermine public health research, the practical effect has been just that: CDC has not funded needed research into important issues including 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 the Senate to provide CDC with $50 million specifically for firearm morbidity and mortality prevention research as part of FY 2020 appropriations. If provided on an annual basis, this funding could support the creation of 10 to 20 new large multi-year studies each year (or even more single-year studies) and the rebuilding of a research community that has shrunk in the decades since the Dickey Amendment. Robust 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 gun violence in our communities, including ensuring CDC is able to adequately fund research into this public health priority.

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

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Academic Pediatric Association
AFFIRM Research
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Anthropological Association
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American College of Surgeons
American Educational Research Association
American Medical Association
American Medical Student Association
American Medical Women's Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Pediatric Society
American Pediatric Surgical Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
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Association of Accredited Public Health Programs
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Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Association of Departments of Family Medicine
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors
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Big Cities Health Coalition
Brain Injury Association of America
Catholic Health Association of the U.S.
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National League for Nursing
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives
National Women’s Health Network
North American Primary Care Research Group
North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Pediatric Endocrine Society
Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America
Pediatric Policy Council
Pediatric Trauma Society
Population Association of America
Prevention Institute
Psychiatrists for Gun Violence Prevention
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Scoliosis Research Society
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Society of Thoracic Surgeons
Trust for America’s Health
Zero to Three

State and Local Organizations:

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American Academy of Pediatrics - California Chapter 2
American Academy of Pediatrics - California Chapter 3
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Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association
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New Hampshire Pediatric Society
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New Jersey Public Health Association
New York State American Academy of Pediatrics
North Carolina Pediatric Society
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Ohio Public Health Association
Oklahoma Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
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Rhode Island Public Health Association
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Utah Public Health Association
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West Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Wisconsin Public Health Association

1 https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/firearm_mortality/firearm.htm
February 21, 2019

Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Kay Granger  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Tom Cole  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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