

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**October 25, 2017**

**To: Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic Members and Staff**

**Fr: Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic Staff**

**Re: Democratic Forum on “Exploring Public Health Solutions to Gun Violence in America”**

On **Thursday, October 26, 2017, at 11:30 a.m. in the Members’ Room in the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building**, Democratic Members of the Energy and Commerce Committee will hold a forum titled “Exploring Public Health Solutions to Gun Violence in America.” Experts will discuss public health approaches to prevent gun violence and the role that federally-funded research must play in responding to America’s gun violence epidemic.

**I. BACKGROUND**

On any given day, an average of 315 Americans will be shot with a firearm.<sup>1</sup> Of those, 93 will die from their injuries.<sup>2</sup> In fact, gun violence is among the top five causes of death in the United States for Americans under the age of 65.<sup>3</sup> Of the nearly 34,000 Americans who died from gun violence in 2015, approximately two-thirds were due to suicide and the remaining approximately one-third were due to homicides.<sup>4</sup> The United States has a gun-related homicide

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<sup>1</sup> Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, *Key Gun Violence Statistics* (2016)(<https://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics>).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Personal Firearms: Programs that Promote Safe Storage and Research on Their Effectiveness* (Sept. 2017) (<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-665>).

<sup>4</sup> Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, *Key Gun Violence Statistics* (2016) (<https://www.bradycampaign.org/key-gun-violence-statistics>).

rate that is more than 25 times the averages of other developed nations.<sup>5</sup> Within the category of homicides, those killed in mass shooting events make up less than half a percent of the total number of people killed by firearms every year in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

There is also enormous risk in homes. On average, a child is shot by accident every 34 hours.<sup>7</sup> Seven children between the ages of 0 and 19 are killed each day in gun-related incidents.<sup>8</sup>

Guns also play a deadly role in intimate partner violence. According to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, domestic violence assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other means.<sup>9</sup> Further, abused women are five times more likely to be killed by their abuser if the abuser has access to a firearm and more than half of all murders of women are committed with a gun.<sup>10</sup>

## II. COST OF GUN VIOLENCE IN AMERICA

According to an analysis released in 2015, the total cost of gun violence in the United States is \$229 billion each year, including costs borne by federal health care programs.<sup>11</sup> Direct costs can include: emergency medical care, long term medical and mental health care, court and prison costs, and police force investigations.<sup>12</sup> In addition those costs associated with those directly involved in a gun violence incident and its aftermath. These costs can include increased stress and poor mental health outcomes from exposure to gun violence as well as reduced opportunities to sustain or improve one's physical health through exercise in parks and other public places in the community.

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<sup>5</sup> *How US Gun Culture Compares with the World in 5 Charts*, CNN (Oct. 4, 2017) (<http://www.cnn.com/2017/10/03/americas/us-gun-statistics/index.html>).

<sup>6</sup> *The Math of Mass Shootings*, The Washington Post (Oct. 5, 2017) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/mass-shootings-in-america/>).

<sup>7</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety, *Gun Violence by the Numbers* (<https://everytownresearch.org/gun-violence-by-the-numbers/>).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, *Commonsense Solutions: State Laws to Address Gun Violence Against Women* (2014) (<http://lawcenter.giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Commonsense-Solutions-State-Laws-to-Address-Gun-Violence-Against-Women.pdf>).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *The True Cost of Gun Violence in America*, Mother Jones (Apr. 15, 2015) (<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/04/true-cost-of-gun-violence-in-america/>).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

### III. GUN VIOLENCE RESEARCH

Though it is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, gun violence is one of the least researched causes.<sup>13</sup> For example, a recent analysis published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) concluded that gun violence research is significantly underfunded and research publications on the topic are disproportionately low compared to the other leading causes of death.<sup>14</sup> Further, the analysis found that the deaths from gun violence were comparable to deaths from sepsis, however, funding for gun violence research totaled 0.7 percent and the research publications are 4 percent of those for sepsis.<sup>15</sup> Another recent analysis, *Personal Firearms: Programs that Promote Safe Storage and Research on their Effectiveness*, by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that, like other gun safety issues, safe storage of personal firearms has not been widely studied and safe storage programs have not been widely evaluated.<sup>16</sup>

Researchers and government agencies have pointed to federal funding instability as contributing to the limited research into this serious public health issue.<sup>17</sup> The near absence of federal funding for gun violence research is attributed to a restriction on HHS funding “to advocate or promote gun control,” often referred to as the “CDC ban”. This funding restriction was originally placed on CDC funding in the 1997 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act and was eventually extended to all HHS programs through the 2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

This funding prohibition resulted from efforts undertaken by the National Rifle Association (NRA) to eliminate the CDC Injury Prevention Center following publication of CDC-funded research into firearms safety. In 1993, Dr. Arthur Kellerman and colleagues published the results of CDC Injury Prevention Center funded research in the New England Journal of Medicine article, *Gun ownership as a risk factor for homicide in the home*.<sup>18</sup> That study found that having a gun in one’s home increases the risk of homicide in the home. After that study was published, the NRA called for the elimination of the CDC Injury Prevention

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<sup>13</sup> *Americans are more likely to die from gun violence than many leading causes of death combined*, Business Insider (Oct. 2, 2017) (<http://www.businessinsider.com/gun-death-statistics-assault-mass-shootings-accidents-2017-10>).

<sup>14</sup> David E. Stark and Nigam H. Shah, *Funding and Publications on Research on Gun Violence and Other Leading Causes of Death*, Journal of American Medical Association (Jan. 3, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Personal Firearms: Programs that Promote Safe Storage and Research on Their Effectiveness* (Sept. 2017) (<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-665>).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> Arthur L. Kellermann et. al., *Gun Ownership as a Risk Factor for Homicide in the Home*, The New England Journal of Medicine (Oct. 7, 1993).

Center on the grounds that it was using these studies as propaganda against gun ownership.<sup>19</sup> Although the NRA did not succeed in eliminating the center, it led to the inclusion of the CDC ban, otherwise known as the “Dickey Amendment.” It also led to the redistribution of the \$2.6 million in CDC funding, the total amount that had been allocated to gun violence research in the previous year, to traumatic brain injury prevention efforts as part of the 1997 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Although the “Dickey Amendment” does not explicitly ban CDC, NIH, or other HHS agencies from funding gun violence research, the results are undeniable. The CDC ban has had a chilling effect on research and publications on gun violence. For example, CDC’s budget on gun violence research decreased by 96 percent between the adoption of the “Dickey Amendment” and 2012.<sup>20</sup> In 2012, of the \$5.6 billion budget for CDC, only \$100,000 was designated for gun violence-related research.<sup>21</sup>

#### **IV. WITNESSES**

**Kris Brown, JD**

Co-President

Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence

**Kyle Fischer, MD, MPH**

Policy Director, National Network of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs

Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Maryland School of Medicine

**Ruth Glenn**

Executive Director

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

**Sharon Homan, MS, Ph.D.**

President

Sinai Urban Health Institute, Sinai Health System

**Corinne Peek-Asa, MPH, Ph.D.**

Associate Dean for Research, College of Public Health, University of Iowa; Professor of Occupational and Environmental Health; Director of the International Injury and Violence Prevention Training Program

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<sup>19</sup> American Psychological Association, *Gun Violence Research: History of the Federal Funding Freeze* (Feb. 2013) (<http://www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2013/02/gun-violence.aspx>).

<sup>20</sup> Ted Alcorn, *Trends in Research Publications About Gun Violence in the United States, 1960 to 2014*, Journal of American Medical Association (Jan. 2017).

<sup>21</sup> Mayors Against Illegal Guns, *Access Denied: How the Gun Lobby is Depriving Police, Policy Makers, and the Public of the Data We Need to Prevent Gun Violence* (Jan. 2013) ([http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/c1/6/1017/3/access\\_denied.pdf](http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/c1/6/1017/3/access_denied.pdf)).

**Megan Ranney, MD, MPH, FACEP**

Associate Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine, Alpert Medical School, Brown University; Core Researcher, Injury Prevention Center of Rhode Island Hospital; Director, Emergency Digital Health Innovation Program

**Susan B. Sorenson, Ph.D.**

Professor of Social Policy; Professor of Health & Societies; Senior Fellow in Public Health; Director, Evelyn Jacobs Ortner Center on Family Violence, University of Pennsylvania

**Monica Valdes Lupi, JD, MPH**

Executive Director  
Boston Public Health Commission

**Joseph L. Wright, MD, MPH, FAAP**

Professor and Chair  
Department of Pediatrics and Child Health, Howard University College of Medicine