

Month XX, 2025

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

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

The Honorable Tom Cole
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 Collins, Vice Chair Murray, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, 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 represent many medical, public health, and research organizations, including members who are proud firearm owners. The freedom of individuals to own firearms can and should be balanced with protecting children and their families from serious harm, and ensuring the health, security, and well-being of all people. This is why our organizations strongly support federal funding for research into firearm morbidity and mortality prevention.

We are grateful to Congress for providing \$12.5 million for the CDC and \$12.5 million for the NIH in FY 2025 and encourage Congress to sustain and build on this funding in FY 2026. These agencies, along with the NIJ, are complementary yet uniquely integral to this work. The CDC focuses its research efforts on preventing firearm-related injuries and sharing vital public health statistics; the NIH focuses on using health system data to identify the root causes behind firearm injury; and the NIJ focuses on the links between firearm-related injuries, deaths, and crime. All three share and use their collective findings to best inform their work and evaluate potential lifesaving interventions.

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 2023, the most recent year for which we have data, firearm-related injuries led to 46,728 total fatalities, with suicides contributing to more than half of those deaths.^{1,2}

After decades without dedicated funding, Congress came together in 2019 to reach a bipartisan agreement to provide this research funding in the FY 2020 spending bill that was signed into law by President Trump. We are grateful for these continued investments and their positive impact in the lives of Americans. These initial research investments are a crucial step toward 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.

Since 2020, the CDC and NIH have made dozens of awards for two- and three-year projects in states all across the country to improve scientific understanding of firearm-related morbidity and mortality and to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of death and injury prevention strategies, as well as determinants of firearm injury, the identification of those at risk, and the evaluation of innovative interventions.^{3,4,5} Several of these projects provide insights on how to reduce suicide risk in U.S. Army soldiers and veterans, how to partner with families and adolescents in rural areas to promote firearm safety, how to improve intervention strategies to reduce urban youth firearm injuries, how to help families with loved ones experiencing dementia talk through secure storage solutions, and the relationship between firearm access and opioid-related harm on firearm suicide risk, among other topics. This research is already yielding valuable results: we now have insight into screening tools and interventions for healthcare settings that could help prevent future violence and suicide among people at risk, and into the use of crisis hotline data to better understand how mass shootings impact young people.⁶

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. A 2021 report by Health Management Associates estimated that the federal government will need to spend approximately \$100 million per year to fully fund a comprehensive research agenda on reducing firearm morbidity and mortality.⁷ At current funding levels, agencies receive many more quality proposals than they are able to fund. With additional funding, we can research the most effective methods to prevent firearm-related suicides, measures to help prevent the next shooting at a school or public place, how to help law enforcement address illegal guns in our communities, 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 2026 appropriations. Continuing this funding is critical, and expanded funding could support the creation of additional, multi-year studies and accelerate the rebuilding of a research community that shrank in the decades before Congress restored this federal funding under the Trump administration. 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.

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 Johns Hopkins - Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Continuing Trends: Five Key Takeaways from 2023 CDC Provisional Gun Violence Data.” September 12, 2024. Available at: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/2024/continuing-trends-five-key-takeaways-from-2023-cdc-provisional-gun-violence-data>.

² Johns Hopkins - Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Continuing Trends: Five Key Takeaways from 2023 CDC Provisional Gun Violence Data.” September 12, 2024. Available at: <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/2024/continuing-trends-five-key-takeaways-from-2023-cdc-provisional-gun-violence-data>.

³ 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/>.

⁴ 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>.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Funded Research Summaries.” Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/firearm-violence/php/research-summaries/index.html>.

⁷ 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.