

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan,

We respectfully urge you to take up legislation to repeal the “Dickey Amendment” and provide adequate funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to research the intersection between firearm-related violence and the public health of all Americans.

The Dickey Amendment has had a chilling effect on the CDC and other federal agencies who are responsible for conducting life-saving research. The rider serves as an unnecessary barrier to finding meaningful and workable solutions to our nation’s gun violence epidemic, so much so that the ban’s author, the late Representative Jay Dickey, came to regret its effects. Most recently, in the wake of the tragic Parkland, FL school killings, there appears to be an opening to finally rescind this unwarranted and detrimental impediment on federally funded research and once again conduct research that could save lives.

Last week, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said that, “Our ability to do research on the causes of violence and the causes behind tragedies...is a priority for us.” You yourself are quoted as saying we need more “facts and data.” And House Judiciary Chairman Goodlatte also recently said, “I don’t think it’s inappropriate...to take a look at it.”

We agree. Research on gun violence is one important way to help reduce the incidence of gun violence and unnecessary deaths of school children and all Americans. This is a common-sense step that warrants immediate consideration in the House of Representatives.

Gun-related deaths now nearly equal deaths from traffic accidents, but for too long, policymakers have lacked the comprehensive tools to craft an effective response to the public health crisis of gun violence. In June 2013, the Institute of Medicine developed a research agenda on gun violence that can be conducted over the next three to five years, including the characteristics of firearm violence, risk and protective factors, and the impact of gun safety technology. Dedicated funding will allow the CDC to conduct this important life-saving research.


According to data compiled by the National Center of Injury Prevention and Control, between 1999 and 2010 firearm related violence claimed the lives of more than 360,000 individuals in the United States, including 35,366 children and teenagers. The Institute of Medicine report from June 2013 said, “By their sheer magnitude, injuries and deaths involving firearms constitute a pressing public health problem.”

Research on the root causes of this important public health concern will better inform policymakers and the American people on how best to address this epidemic. We respectfully urge you to take up legislation that would allow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to study the issue of firearms safety and gun violence prevention.

Mr. Speaker, you have said we need more facts and data on this issue and we agree. Federal research is essential to provide us the facts and data we deserve to protect every American and prevent more senseless tragedies. Thank you for your attention to our urgent request.

Sincerely,

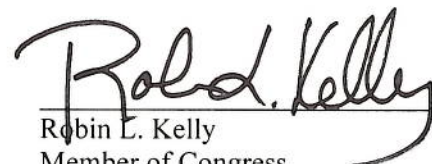

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