



American College of Preventive Medicine
physicians dedicated to prevention

January 8, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable Mike Thompson
Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable Peter King
Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Madam Speaker, Representative Thompson, and Representative King,

The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) greatly appreciates your leadership in introducing legislation that would require universal background checks for firearm sales. As a national organization of physicians dedicated to prevention, ACPM believes in a comprehensive, public health approach to addressing the issue of gun violence. We strongly support H.R. 8 and its goal of increasing public safety.

This legislation takes important steps toward preventing gun violence. There were nearly 40,000 deaths from firearm-related injuries in 2016, including those from suicides, homicides, and unintentional deaths. This rose by more than 1,000 from the year before. A 2017 study found that 22 percent of gun owners who obtained a gun within the past two years did so using a transaction that did not include a background check, and that 50 percent of gun owners who acquired their most recent gun through a private sale within the same timeframe did so in a transaction that did not include a background check.¹ State laws requiring background checks for all handgun sales are associated with lower firearm homicide rates and lower firearm suicide rates.² These laws are also associated with 48 percent lower rates of gun trafficking in cities³ and 29 percent lower rates of gun trafficking across state lines.⁴

Gun violence is a public health issue, and ACPM calls on Congress to take the steps necessary to increase safety around this issue. We also hope that in the coming year, Congress will address the need to greatly increase funding for research into gun violence issues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Should you have any questions, please contact Kate McFadyen (kmcfadyen@acpm.org).

In the spirit of advancing improved health outcomes for all,

Robert Carr, MD, MPH, FACPM
President, American College of Preventive Medicine

¹ Matthew Miller, Lisa Hepburn, and Deborah Azrael, "Firearm Acquisition Without Background Checks: Results of a National Survey," *Annals of Internal Medicine* 166 (4) (2017): 233–239

² Fleegler EW, Lee LK, Monuteaux MC, Hemenway D, Mannix R. Firearm legislation and firearm-related fatalities in the United States. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 2013; 173(9):732-740.

³ Webster DW, Vernick JS, Bulzacchelli MT. Effects of state-level firearm seller accountability policies on firearm trafficking. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2009. 86(4):525–537.

⁴ Federal law bars felons from having firearms, but does not bar misdemeanors outside the domestic violence context. Webster DW, Vernick JS, McGinty EE, & Alcorn T. Preventing the diversion of guns to criminals through effective firearm sales laws. In *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*. 2013. Vol. 9781421411118, pp. 109-121.