

April 2, 2018

The Honorable Stephanie Murphy  
1237 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Murphy:

On behalf of organizations dedicated to the health of all children, we write to share our strong support for the *Gun Violence Research Act* (H.R. 1478). This bill would eliminate the prohibition on the Department of Health and Human Services using federal funds to advocate or promote gun control. We are pleased to see bipartisan support for public health research into preventing tragedies like that which recently befell the youth of Parkland, Florida, and countless other gun violence tragedies that occur across the U.S. every day, year after year.

The impact of federal public health research in reducing deaths from threats such as car accidents, smoking, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome has been well proven. Robust research on car accidents and subsequent legislation has helped save hundreds of thousands of lives without preventing people from being able to drive. This same approach should be applied to reducing gun violence in our communities.

Unfortunately, a 1996 amendment to a federal spending bill, the “Dickey Amendment,” created a chilling effect on public health research on gun violence prevention at the federal level. Despite the amendment sponsor’s later statement that he never intended to squash research, the practical effect has been just that: no CDC or NIH research into important issues such as the best ways to protect children from being unintentionally shot by adults or other 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 more. Your legislation would clarify that the Dickey Amendment does not in fact prohibit research into gun-related public health matters.

Gun violence is a public health epidemic that is killing our children, and to stop an epidemic, funding and support for gun-related public health research must work hand-in-hand with other gun safety policies. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Pediatric Policy Council urge elected officials to immediately pass gun safety laws that already have some scientific support, including those that would require stronger background checks, ban semiautomatic assault weapons, address firearm trafficking, and encourage safe firearm storage. We also remain steadfast in our advocacy to support violence prevention programs, physician counseling and mental health access.

Gun violence is a complex issue and requires our full attention from every angle. Pediatricians will continue to fight for policies that keep children safe from guns where they live, learn, and play. We thank you for your leadership on this issue, and stand ready to assist you in moving this bill forward. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Ami Gadhia in the AAP’s Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or [agadhia@aap.org](mailto:agadhia@aap.org).

Sincerely,



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