

RON JOHNSON, WISCONSIN, CHAIRMAN

JOHN McCAIN, ARIZONA
ROB PORTMAN, OHIO
RAND PAUL, KENTUCKY
JAMES LANKFORD, OKLAHOMA
MICHAEL B. ENZI, WYOMING
KELLY AYOTTE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
JONI ERNST, IOWA
BEN SASSE, NEBRASKA

THOMAS R. CARPER, DELAWARE
CLAIRE McCASKILL, MISSOURI
JON TESTER, MONTANA
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN
HEIDI HEITKAMP, NORTH DAKOTA
CORY A. BOOKER, NEW JERSEY
GARY C. PETERS, MICHIGAN

CHRISTOPHER R. HIXON, STAFF DIRECTOR
GABRIELLE A. BATKIN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

June 17, 2016

Dr. Tom Frieden
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Frieden:

Let me begin by thanking you for your leadership of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) during an especially challenging chapter in our nation's history. I also write today to urge the CDC to expand its support for scientific research into the causes and prevention of gun violence and to use available research funds to aid in this effort.

Following the deadliest shooting in our nation's history in Orlando on June 12, 2016, the American Medical Association (AMA) adopted a policy calling gun violence "a public health crisis" requiring a comprehensive response from the public health community. The AMA also cited a provision in current law that it believes has prohibited the CDC from researching gun violence for the past 20 years.

While I agree with the AMA that gun violence is a public health crisis and commend their dedication to its prevention, I believe the AMA was incorrect in suggesting that the CDC is banned from conducting gun violence research.

As you may recall, I wrote to you earlier this year requesting information regarding the CDC's interpretation of the Dickey Amendment, the provision in law that the AMA believes restricts the CDC's gun violence research efforts. In response, the CDC indicated that it interpreted the amendment to "prohibit impermissible lobbying related to advocating or promoting gun control" but that "activities that supported the collection of firearm injury-related data and engagement in scientific, public health research directed to preventing injuries from violence and firearms were still permissible." The CDC also stated that "understanding the patterns, characteristics, and impact of firearm violence is an important step toward preventing firearm injuries and deaths in the United States."

The CDC's response and conversations with my staff have also informed me that the CDC is reluctant to conduct gun violence research, not because of the Dickey Amendment, but due to limited funding in the absence of a \$10 million line-item appropriation for gun violence research. Despite President Obama's FY 2016 and 2017

Dr. Tom Frieden
June 17, 2016
Page 2

budget requests including \$10 million for research on the causes of gun violence and ways to prevent it, Congress has not acted to provide any level of funding for this effort. This is a failure on the part of Congress, and I am committed to helping the CDC obtain this additional funding.

However, in the absence of Congressional leadership, I strongly urge the CDC to prioritize existing funds to allow a more robust research process to begin. The CDC has done some work, including a recent report on gun violence in my hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, an expansion of the National Violent Death Reporting System, and an effort with stakeholders to identify the most pressing research questions on this issue. However, the public health community has an opportunity to do much more while also respecting the right of law-abiding citizens to buy and own firearms under the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Using a public health approach of defining problems, identifying risk factors, and testing prevention strategies is a common sense step the CDC and our nation can take to reduce gun violence. Thank you very much for your consideration of this request and for your leadership of CDC.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



Tom Carper
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman