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The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
131 Dirkson House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
156 Dirkson House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association, I am writing to urge you to specifically provide federal support for gun violence research in appropriations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Fiscal Year 2019. Gun violence continues to take a significant toll on our patients and our communities. As scientists and advocates for our patients, physicians must be led by evidence in addressing the impact of gun violence on individuals and populations as a whole.

The paucity of federally supported research on the epidemiology of gun violence severely limits the ability of our communities to implement effective interventions that would help stem this tide. A research letter published in the January 3, 2017 edition of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* provides stark evidence of the lack of necessary research. According to the authors, gun violence is the least researched cause of death, receiving only 1.6 percent of the funding that would be expected based on mortality rate. Furthermore, the letter notes that “Given that gun violence disproportionately affects the young and inflicts many more nonfatal injuries than deaths, it is likely that the true magnitude of research funding disparity, when considering years of potential life lost or lived with disability, is even greater.”

We appreciate the comments of HHS Secretary Azar to this committee when he stated that “we don’t see any barriers around violence or firearm violence research. We’re in the evidence and science-gathering business.” Unfortunately, while there may be no statutory prohibition, agencies still appear reluctant to engage in this research, potentially due to a lack of clear direction or specific funding from the Congress.

We therefore urge your committees to provide specific funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and other appropriate federal entities to research the epidemiology of gun violence so that effective interventions may be implemented and lives may be saved.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD