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The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. Senate  
131 Dirksen 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 Dirksen 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 (AMA), I am writing to urge you to provide specific federal funding for gun violence research in appropriations for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for Fiscal Year 2020. As we have seen with the recent mass shootings in El Paso, Dayton, and Gilroy, and continuing daily homicides, suicides, and injuries resulting from firearms, gun violence continues to take a significant toll on our patients and our communities.

Gun violence in the United States is a public health crisis. As such, there is a critical need for comprehensive, multi-faceted public health solutions. Public health is focused on preventing disease and injury in communities and populations on a larger scale and promoting public safety. Addressing the high number of gun-related homicides, suicides, and injuries—many of which are preventable—is as much a public health issue as is addressing tobacco use, underage drinking, alcohol and substance use disorders, vaccinations, safety belt use, and helmet use for bicyclists and motorcyclists. Determining the root causes—through federally-funded research—of any public health problem is critical to developing solutions. A key element of an enhanced public health response to preventing gun violence is improved surveillance and epidemiological research studying the causes of gun violence, the risk factors associated with gun violence, and interventions that might work. As scientists and advocates for our patients, physicians must be led by evidence in addressing the causes of and impact of gun violence on individuals and communities. The lack of federally supported research on the epidemiology of gun violence severely limits the ability of policymakers, physicians and other health providers, law enforcement, and society at large to design appropriate interventions to prevent injury, death, and other harms to society resulting from firearms.

Accordingly, as you consider FY 2020 funding for HHS, the AMA believes dedicated funding for federal agencies to conduct gun violence research, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health, is a necessary first step to stemming the tide of this crisis. The AMA stands ready to work with you and your colleagues in Congress in reducing injury and death by firearms in the U.S.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD