

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2022

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
2 Constitution Ave NE
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Minority Leader McConnell,

We write urging you to rally your caucus to support common sense reforms that can directly stem the rise of gun violence we see in our communities across the country. As you know, the House passed the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021 (H.R. 8) and the Enhanced Background Checks Act (H.R. 1446) on March 11, 2021 and both were received by the Senate that day. These House-passed bills that would save lives have sat unmoved in the Senate for over a full calendar year. On the day of House passage, Majority Leader Schumer publicly announced his support of H.R. 8, and H.R. 1446.¹ Gun violence is an epidemic of catastrophic proportions that is taking our loved ones, our youth, our neighbors, and our public servants. The U.S. gun death rate is 13 times greater than other high-income nations. By this time each year, more Americans are killed with guns than in other high-income nations in an entire year. We must address it through meaningful and holistic solutions that put the needs of our constituents and communities first, and passing both H.R. 8 and H.R. 1446 are necessary steps towards that. As such, we implore you to marshal your caucus to support a floor vote in the Senate for common sense gun reform measures already passed in the House.

The rise of gun violence during the pandemic is not unique nor limited to any particular community or geographic region, further underlining the urgency for federal legislative action. The prevalence of guns in more and more homes and communities has risen dangerously. 2020 and 2021 were record years for gun sales totaling 22.8 million and 19.9 million respectively, easily dwarfing the previous record set in 2016 of 16.7 million.² Ensuring complete background

¹Schumer, Charles. "Majority Leader Schumer Statement Following the House Passage of The Bipartisan Background Checks Bill." *Office of Majority Leader Schumer*. Mar 11, 2021. Available Here: <https://www.democrats.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/majority-leader-schumer-statement-following-the-house-passage-of-the-bipartisan-background-checks-bill>

² Walsh, Joe. "US Bought Almost 20 Million Guns Last Year - Second-Highest Year on Record." *Forbes*. Jan 5, 2022. Available Here: forbes.com/sites/joewalsh/2022/01/05/us-bought-almost-20-million-guns-last-year---second-highest-year-on-record/?sh=69a085d513bb

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

checks are conducted before a sale is finalized is made all the more difficult given the volume of sales. Gun sales at this level not only increase the likelihood of gun trafficking into states with more strict gun control policies, but it also coincides with a higher risk of violence everywhere. For example, Lexington, Kentucky has seen two consecutive years of record numbers of homicides overwhelmingly involving firearms following the national trend with over 20,000 killed by gun violence in 2021.³ You can take action now to put a stop to this spike in gun violence and loss by rallying your Republican colleagues to join Democrats in passing H.R. 8 and H.R. 1446.

The danger presented by senseless gun violence and gun trafficking has also grown significantly during the pandemic putting families and children in particular at risk. Amidst this boom in gun sales, nearly 30% of all firearm purchases in 2021 were made by first-time buyers, creating an estimated 5.4 million new gun owners.⁴ Historically, new gun owners are more likely to have more haphazard gun safety practices in the home leading to harmful and deadly accidents. From March to December 2020, unintentional shooting deaths by children rose by 31% with at least an additional 371 unintentional shootings by children in 2021.⁵ Moreover, the rise in first-time gun owners increases the likelihood of firearm theft that can contribute to the spike in violence. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has cataloged nearly 14,800 guns between 2012 and 2018 recovered by local police in relation to a crime that were reported lost or stolen.⁶ This figure likely grossly underestimates the number of stolen guns in circulation and the threat they pose with some research suggesting as many as 300,000 guns were stolen in 2020 alone.⁷

This unprecedented influx of guns illustrates the need to implement common sense gun reforms that will help keep our families and communities healthy and safe. The House began the 117th Congress by passing H.R.8 and H.R. 1446 - both on a bipartisan basis. These bills would mandate universal background checks for nearly all gun transfers to limit unregistered access to firearms. Not only did H.R. 8 garner the support of the entire Democratic Caucus, but it also was cosponsored by and received yes votes from multiple Republicans, speaking to the shared

³ Wymer, Garrett. "Lexington not alone in escalation of gun violence in 2021." *WKYT*. Dec 31, 2021. Available Here: <https://www.wkyt.com/2021/12/31/lexington-not-alone-escalation-gun-violence-2021/>

⁴ Brassard, Bill. "NSSF Retailer Surveys Indicate 5.4 Million First-Time Gun Buyers in 2021." *The National Shooting Sports Foundation*. Jan 25, 2022. Available Here: <https://www.nssf.org/articles/nssf-retailer-surveys-indicate-5-4-million-first-time-gun-buyers-in-2021/>

⁵ Everytown For Gun Safety. "#NotAnAccident Index" *Everytown Research & Policy*. Jan 31, 2022. Available Here: <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/notanaccident/>

⁶ Parsons, Chelsea. "Gun Theft in the United States: A State-by-State Analysis." *Center for American Progress*. Mar 4, 2020. Available Here: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-theft-united-states-state-state-analysis/>

⁷ Mascia, Jennifer. "How Many Guns Fall Out of Circulation Each Year in the US?" *The Trace*. Oct 20, 2021. Available Here: <https://www.thetrace.org/2021/10/firearm-average-lifespan-how-many-lost-stolen-broken-guns/>

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

recognition in the House of Representatives that common sense gun reform can help constituents in red and blue districts alike. H.R. 1446 similarly passed the House with bipartisan support. 84% of all voters support mandating background checks for all gun purchases, and 77% of Republicans agree, highlighting the broad appeal of a piece of legislation that would save lives and help protect our children.⁸

With this in mind, we urge you, as the Minority Leader of the Senate, to meet Majority Leader Schumer and Senate Democrats across the aisle in partnership to vote on and pass H.R. 8 and H.R. 1446 in the Senate and send it to President Biden's desk for signature. Given how much is at stake, anything less than this would be a tragic, unacceptable obstruction to preventing gun violence and gun-related deaths.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Joseph Biden, President of the United States
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate

⁸ Yokley, Eli. "Voters Are Nearly United in Support for Expanded Background Checks." *The Morning Consult*. Mar 10, 2021. Available Here: <https://morningconsult.com/2021/03/10/house-gun-legislation-background-checks-polling/>

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Ed Case
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver II
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Robin Kelly
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Susie Lee
Member of Congress

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Marie Newman
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Scott Peters
Member of Congress

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress