

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 18, 2015

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Every day on average, 55 people kill themselves with a firearm, and 46 people are shot or killed in an accident with a gun. The Washington Post reported last month that so far in 2015 there have been 43 instances where a toddler three or under has shot themselves or others, leading to 15 fatalities and 28 injuries. With more than 300 million guns in American homes, we write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a study to assess the efficacy of public health and safety programs designed to impact gun safety, including the storage and security of guns in households throughout our country.

Death and injury by firearm is one of the most significant public health threats to young people in communities across our nation. While long perceived as an urban issue, in fact, youth (up to age 19) in the most rural U.S. counties are almost as likely to die from a gunshot, self-inflicted or otherwise, as those living in the most urban counties. Furthermore, a 1999 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association estimated that the lifetime medical cost of treating gunshot injuries in the United States was \$2.3 billion, with almost half the costs borne by taxpayers.

Given these stark statistics, prevention of gun deaths and injuries should be an essential component of the federal government's commitment to public health and safety along with other efforts such as background checks on gun purchases and closing other gun loopholes. Federal campaigns, such as those related to drinking and driving and smoking, have demonstrated that public health and safety campaigns can improve understanding and reduce dangerous behavior, with significant public health benefits.

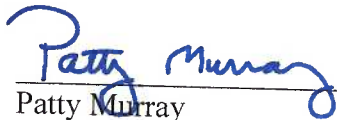
Too many families have suffered tragic losses and hardships as a result of gun deaths and injuries. This public health burden demands an assessment of potential actions by the federal government, including the possibility of robust partnerships with established nonprofits and provider organizations in the development of a public campaign aimed at informing physicians, clinicians, parents, and families about the public health need to address this urgent issue.

To that end, we request that GAO conduct a report that:

1. Analyzes the impacts of existing publicly- and privately-operated public health and safety programs at the federal, state, and local level that further raise awareness among the public of the risk factors associated with having guns in the home and provide best practices on how families and communities can engage in a conversation about the safe and secure storage of guns in the household.
2. Identifies existing public health and safety programs (publicly- and privately-operated efforts at the federal, state, and local level) that seek to address unsafe gun access and to ensure safe practices with regards to firearms.
3. Inventories federal agencies whose missions relate to public health or violence prevention and the ways in which programs described under question number one relate to such missions. Such programs can include public health or safety, children's health, criminal justice, or violence prevention programs.

We appreciate your attention to this request and your cooperation on this issue as we seek more information on these issues. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Andi Lipstein Fristedt with the staff of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions staff at (202) 224-7675.

Sincerely,



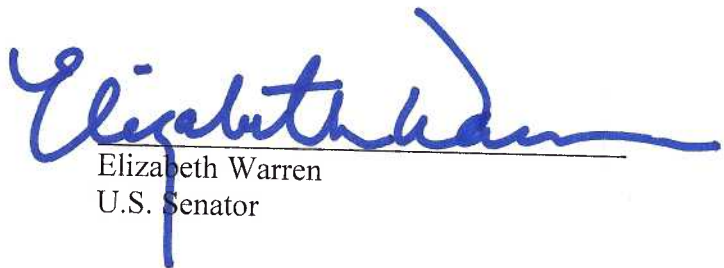
Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator



Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator



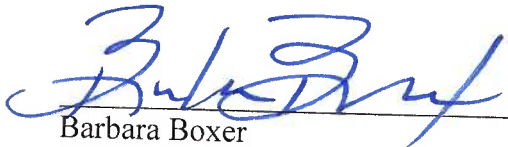
Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator





Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



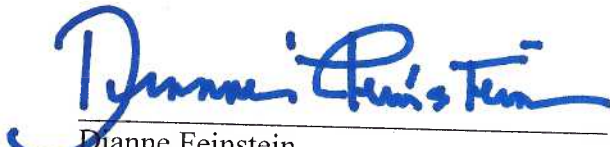
Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator


Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator

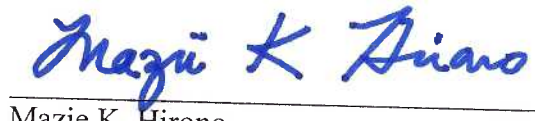

Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator

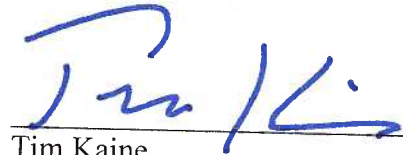

Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator

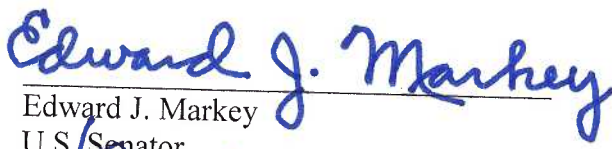

Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator

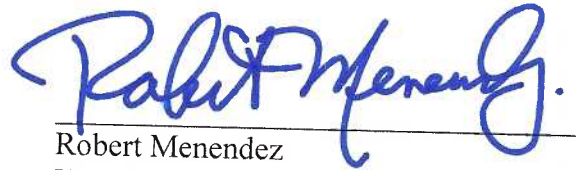

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

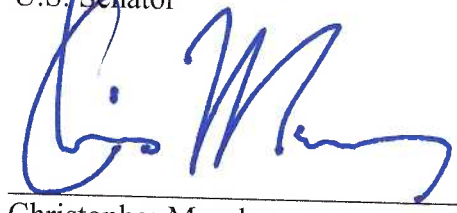

Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator


Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator

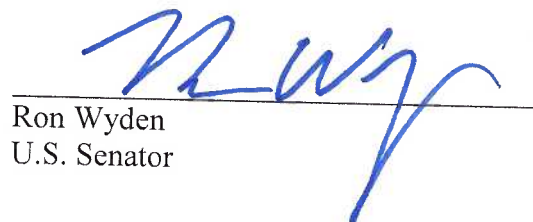

Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator


Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator


Christopher Murphy
U.S. Senator


Jack Reed
U.S. Senator


Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator


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