Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 23, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
2413 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin work on the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we respectfully urge you to support investments in public health research by including $23.5 million for the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVRDS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and an additional $10 million in funding for the CDC to research firearm related violence as it interacts with public health.

Currently, the National Violent Death Reporting System collects surveillance data in only 32 states. The data collected helps inform policy makers on trends and characteristics of violent deaths within specific communities so they can design appropriate prevention measures and evaluate ongoing efforts to curb violence. Providing $23.5 million in funding would enable the CDC to scale up this effort to include all 50 states. Every State could benefit from data collected using this important system.

In addition, gun-related deaths now nearly equal deaths from traffic accidents, but for too long, policymakers have lacked the comprehensive tools to craft an effective response to the public health crisis of gun violence. In June 2013, the Institute of Medicine developed a research agenda on gun violence that can be conducted over the next three to five years, including the characteristics of firearm violence, risk and protective factors, and the impact of gun safety technology. Dedicated funding of $10 million will allow the CDC to begin this important initiative.

Together, these two funding sources will help ensure our country better understands the root causes and potential methods to prevent firearm related deaths. This research accomplishes a number of important goals. First, it helps inform efforts to invest in firearm safety programs, and allows us to better understand whether violent media or entertainment is a cause of gun violence. In addition, comprehensive public health research and data collection can help ensure we better equip mental health professionals with the necessary tools to

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assess risk-factors for the small minority of patients who may pose a danger to themselves or others.

According to data compiled by the National Center of Injury Prevention and Control, between 1999 and 2010 firearm related violence claimed the lives of more than 360,000 individuals in the United States, including 35,366 children and teenagers. The Institute of Medicine report from June 2013 said, "by their sheer magnitude, injuries and deaths involving firearms constitute a pressing public health problem."

Investing in efforts to better collect data and research the root causes of this important public health concern will better inform public servants and the American people on how best to address this epidemic. We respectfully urge you to address this critical problem by investing in the National Violent Death Reporting System and by providing the CDC with the necessary resources to research firearm related violence as it relates to public health in the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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