

March 22, 2021

Senator Richard J. Durbin
Chair
United State Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Durbin,

On behalf of Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, we submit this statement for the record for the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Constitutional and Common Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence on March 23, 2021.

Lurie Children's supports common sense gun violence prevention measures that expand background checks for firearm purchasers, promote violence prevention research, and address the root causes of gun violence.

We recognize gun violence as a public health crisis with tremendous negative and lasting consequences for children, families, and communities nationwide and in Illinois. The rate of fatal firearm injuries nationwide is 11.2 per 100,000 people – about 100 per day.ⁱ The rate of non-fatal firearm injuries across all states is 27.5 per 100,000 people – more than 230 people each day.ⁱⁱ Gun violence is a uniquely American problem: among 29 high-income countries, 93% of children aged 0-14 killed with guns are from the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ

Children in Illinois are at great risk of gun violence as gun injuries continue to be the leading cause of death for Illinois children ages 5-19.^{iv} Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 180 children and adolescents in Illinois and 3,231 children and adolescents across the country were killed by guns every year. The health burden falls particularly hard on African American youth, as Black children and youth in Illinois are 14 times as likely as their white peers to die by firearms.^v

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state has seen an increase in gun violence. In 2020, firearm injuries in Chicago alone jumped from 2,598 in the year prior to over 4,000.^{vi} Suicides by Black Cook County residents increased by 73 percent with four in 10 deaths caused by a firearm.^{vii}

At Lurie Children's, we take a public health approach to injury and violence prevention. As such, we support gun violence prevention policies that are designed to address the underlying causes and risk factors for becoming a victim or perpetrator of gun violence as well as developing programs and policies that mitigate the effects of trauma at the individual and community level when violence occurs. Reducing gun violence also requires common sense gun safety measures that include regulating the sale of guns, reducing illegal trafficking of firearms, and keeping high-risk individuals from possessing guns. A comprehensive approach also must address the lack of funding for research on gun violence and the need to increase support for research at the state, local, and national level.

We strongly urge the committee to adopt common sense approaches to gun safety, including:

- Require universal background checks for all firearm transactions, regardless of venue.
- Support funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health to research the most effective interventions to reduce gun violence.
- Based on the potential for increased injury and death in the pediatric population, limit the availability of assault weapons and high capacity magazines.
- Pass laws requiring firearms to be stored and secured properly, using gun locks and other safety mechanisms. In addition to accidents that happen when children access loaded weapons, 40% of all youth suicides are committed using firearms.
- Improve the availability and quality of mental health services, particularly for children, adolescents, and young adults.
- Protect the role of physicians in providing guidance to patients about the health hazards of firearms and encourage families to take precautions that safeguard children's health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Senate Judiciary Committee with our comments in support of gun violence prevention through common sense gun safety

measures. If you need additional information, please contact Jill Fraggos at jfraggos@luriechildrens.org or 312.860.6157.

Sincerely,



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ⁱ Everytown. "A More Complete Picture: The Contours of Gun Injury in the United States." Everytown Research & Policy, 8 Dec. 2020, everytownresearch.org/report/nonfatal-in-the-us/#national-findings.

ⁱⁱ Everytown. 8 Dec. 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Erin Grinshteyn and David Hemenway, "Violent death rates in the US compared to those of the other high-income countries, 2015," *Preventive Medicine* 123, (2019): 20–26.

^{iv} Everytown for Gun Safety, Gun Violence in Illinois, EveryStat." maps.everytownresearch.org/everystat#Illinois.

^v CDC, Fatal Injury Report, Five-year average, 2014-2018. See also Everytown for Gun Safety, Gun Violence in Illinois.

^{vi} Associated Press, Chicago ends 2020 with 769 homicides as gun violence surges, January 1, 2021.

^{vii} Chicago Sun Times, More Suicides by Black Cook County residents in 2020 than in any year in over a decade, February 19, 2021.