



June 23, 2022

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write to express our support for the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Passage of this legislation is an important step in the right direction as we seek to enact solutions to address the nation's ongoing gun violence epidemic.

In 2020, the most recent year for which we have data, firearm-related injuries led to 45,222 fatalities, an increase of nearly 15% over the previous year. Yet Congress has repeatedly failed to enact legislation to help address this public health crisis. The devastating killing of 21 people, including 19 elementary school children and two teachers in Uvalde, Tex., the killing of 10 people in Buffalo, N.Y., the four lives lost at the hands of a gunman in Tulsa, Okla. and the many other instances of gun violence across the country are tragic reminders of the magnitude of the gun violence crisis in the U.S.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act includes important provisions to reduce gun violence including:

- expanding background checks by requiring additional investigative steps to review juvenile records and consult with local law enforcement before a person under the age of 21 can purchase a firearm, including assault-style semiautomatic weapons
- new provisions to prevent straw purchases and gun trafficking activities
- clarifying which individuals must register as a federal firearms licensee, preventing sellers from avoiding licensing requirements including the requirement to conduct background checks
- funding to support state implementation of extreme risk protection orders to temporarily suspend a person's access to firearms before they commit violence against others or themselves
- funding for community-based violence intervention programs, mental health services and school safety programs
- closing the "boyfriend loophole" that leaves victims of abuse vulnerable to an armed domestic abuser

We strongly urge all members of the Senate to support this legislation. We also know that there are many other important firearm violence prevention proposals that Congress must consider to keep guns out of the wrong hands and to bolster firearm morbidity and mortality prevention research. We stand ready to work with you to enact the additional legislation and funding that is needed to protect our communities from more gun violence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georges C. Benjamin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director