

Durbin, Duckworth and colleagues urge funding for firearm violence research

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CHICAGO – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and 22 of their colleagues today in urging the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to renew a recently-lapsed funding opportunity for firearm violence research.



Following the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012, President Obama directed the Department of Health and Human Services to research the causes of gun violence and how it can be prevented, resulting in the creation of a new funding opportunity to support research at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute of Mental Health, among other parts of NIH. From 2014 to 2017, NIH provided \$18 million to 22 projects to study gun violence, which the American Medical Association has described as a "‘public health crisis’ requiring a comprehensive public health response and solution."

In a letter to NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins, the senators cited NIH leadership and researchers who noted the importance of this funding in furthering the agency's mission to promote and improve health outcomes, and in understanding "how science can save lives." Despite calls from numerous public health experts to renew the program, the funding opportunity closed on January 8, 2017, and NIH has yet to release a timeline for its decision on renewal of the funding.

“With 93 Americans dying per day from gun-related fatalities, it is critical that NIH dedicate a portion of its resources to the public health consequences of gun violence,” wrote the senators. “We strongly urge you to renew the gun violence research program as soon as possible.”

Gun violence, a leading cause of death in the United States, has historically been underfunded and understudied, due in part to the 1994 Dickey Amendment, which has been interpreted as a ban on federal funding for research on the issue at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In their letter, the senators noted that the amendment does not prohibit objective, scientific inquiries into gun violence prevention.

In addition to Senators Durbin, Duckworth, Warren, Murphy, and Cortez Masto, the letter was signed by Senators Patty Murray (D-WA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Casey (D-PA), Al Franken (D-MN), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Tom Carper (D-DE), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Coons (D-DE), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Jack Reed (D-RI), and Maria Cantwell (D-WA).

Full text of the letter is available [here](#).