



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

November 7, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
The White House Building
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
1233 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
233 Cannon H.O.B.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear President Trump and Congressional Leaders:

We, the undersigned state legislators from the State of Hawaii, urge you to take meaningful action to address the United States' gun violence epidemic by passing commonsense gun safety laws. On October 2, 2017, Americans across the country woke up to yet another senseless act of gun violence at a country music festival in Las Vegas; 59 Americans are dead and more than 500 are injured, making this the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history. And again just this past weekend on November 5th, 25 people killed, plus an unborn child, at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, TX. We still have so many questions – what Stephen Paddock and Davin Patrick Kelly's motives were, how he obtained his firearms, how he planned the attack – but the information we do have is staggering.

As policymakers, we are in a critical position to make these horrible tragedies less common. Too often, the conversation surrounding gun violence frames it as unavoidable, senseless violence perpetrated by unstoppable, dangerous people. This is simply untrue. There are steps we can take right now to make all Americans safer and to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.

Although Americans might have different opinions regarding the types of laws we should employ to combat this systematic problem, a recent Gallup poll found that over 80% of Americans favor a law requiring universal background checks on all firearm sales. Nevertheless, Congress has still refused to act. One need not be an expert on America's gun violence problem to recognize that dangerous persons easily purchasing guns without a background check is dangerous and wrong. Likewise, even the NRA and Republicans and Democrats across the country recently all expressed unanimous support for further protections and bans on "bump stocks" – weapon modifiers affixed to semi-automatic weapons to effectively fire automatically. We desperately need more gun safety protections, and we call on you to support bills in Congress requiring universal background checks and banning bump stock manufacturing, sales, possession, and use.

Another recent Gallup poll found that only 11% of Americans think gun laws should be weakened. Despite this, bills continue to be introduced at both the state and federal levels aiming to loosen gun violence prevention and protection measures already in place. The Hearing Protection Act of 2017, for example, would eliminate the requirement to obtain a permit for purchasing silencers. Bills like this are a national

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embarrassment, making a mockery of the gun violence permeating throughout our country by prioritizing putting money in the pockets of gun manufacturers at the expense of American lives. We call on you to abandon efforts to eliminate or diminish laws promoting responsible, safe gun ownership and use in the United States.

In addition to legislative effort, we must also address the hamstringing of public research on preventing gun violence. 33,880 Americans are killed by guns on average each year. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), this qualifies gun violence as a national public health issue, but because of the Dickey Amendment, which prevents the CDC from spending money to “advocate or promote gun control,” the CDC is hamstrung in its ability to do important, unbiased research on gun violence. The politicization of our nation’s leading public health institution shows, at best, a callous disregard for important scientific research amongst many Republican legislators, and, at worst, a craven willingness to repress the truth to appease the gun lobby. Allowing our nation’s top researchers to study this epidemic would give us all the facts we need to make informed decisions about how we can solve this crisis. We call on you to repeal the Dickey Amendment to allow and support critical gun violence research.

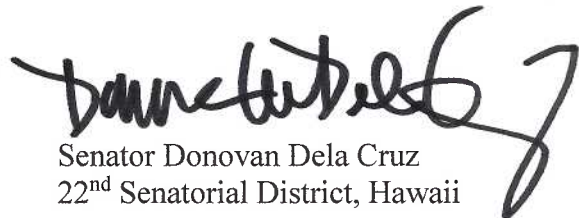
For these reasons, we ask you to hear us and the majority of Americans and urge you to take immediate actions to prevent gun violence in the United States. We are also ready and willing to enact sensible policies at the state level to pass responsible, commonsense solutions to preventing gun violence, and we hope we can count on you to support these efforts.

The reality is that gun violence is not an unsolvable problem. These incidents are not isolated; they are not unpreventable anomalies. As elected officials, we have the power to make substantive changes to our gun laws that can and will save lives, and we have a duty to prevent harm. We can and must take meaningful steps to address this public health crisis in our country – lives are literally depending on us.

Sincerely,



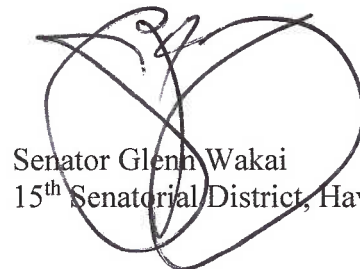
Senator Donna Mercado Kim
14th Senatorial District, Hawaii



Senator Donovan Dela Cruz
22nd Senatorial District, Hawaii



Senator Breene Harimoto
16th Senatorial District, Hawaii



Senator Glen Wakai
15th Senatorial District, Hawaii