



February 17, 2020

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Re: Further request for focus on firearm injury and violence research at the NIH

Dear Drs. Collins and Lauer:

We are writing to follow-up and thank you for your response to our letter sent on October 1, 2019. Both your response letter, and our original letter signed by 65 scientists from institutions across the US requesting a new focus on firearm injury and violence research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), are attached here. We welcomed your response clarifying that the NIH mission includes a commitment to understanding effective public health interventions to prevent firearm violence, and the psychological trauma, physical injuries, and deaths resulting from firearm violence. We are also pleased that NIH-funded research on violence in general continues to be supported. However, we note that only a small portion of these funds have been expressly used to study firearm violence, the leading means of violence, including suicide and homicide, in the US. It is now well documented in the peer-reviewed scientific literature that investment in the study and prevention of firearm violence has been relatively miniscule compared with the over \$200 billion that gun violence costs the nation each year and relative to comparable investments made at NIH for other public health issues.

Our original letter requested the creation of new funding opportunity announcements that draw attention to firearm violence research, new multidisciplinary Scientific Review Groups (SRGs) focused on firearm violence, and making it possible for researchers nationwide to compete for \$100 million in extramural research funding at NIH for the study, prevention, and treatment of firearm violence. As you know, the day-to-day toll of gun violence in the US continues, with recent upticks in firearm deaths from suicide, homicide and mass shootings. Fiscal year 2020 appropriations have now included, for the first time in decades, explicit funding for "firearm injury and mortality prevention research", requiring the NIH to spend \$12.5 million on such research. Given this, we are now writing to respectfully request that the NIH consider:

- (1) creating new firearm violence funding opportunity announcements that, for now, are managed directly from the Office of the NIH Director rather than being spread out among multiple institutes/centers;**
- (2) requesting that the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) create new arrangements for the expanding topic of firearm violence research at NIH, including new multidisciplinary SRGs focused on firearm violence; and**
- (3) instituting a three-year plan to increase competitive, extramural NIH research funding amounting to \$100 million per year for the study, prevention, and treatment of firearm violence as a public health crisis.**

We believe these are fair and reasonable requests. During prior disease and injury crises, the nation made appropriately sized research investments that stimulated robust scientific responses, generating key life-saving solutions and dramatically improving health outcomes. For example, HIV/AIDS received over \$15 billion of initial investments in 2003 leading to dramatic decreases in HIV transmission and AIDS deaths and over \$3 billion was initially invested in 2018 for the opioid overdose crisis. A proportionate investment in firearm violence at NIH could quickly lead to high-impact, research-informed treatment and prevention programs for the more than 100,000 people that continue to be shot with firearms in the US every year as well as for the families and communities exposed to firearm violence, much in the same way the NIH has done so for other diseases and public health crises.

Thank you again for considering our requests. Titles and institutions listed here are for identification purposes only and do not indicate an institutional endorsement. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

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