On MLK Day, the Richmond Peace Education Center calls on all Virginians to honor the spirit of Dr. King’s vision - an inclusive, non-violent community.

For the Peace Center, the holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. has long been one of supporting youth in demonstrating against gun violence and lobbying representatives of the Virginia General Assembly for violence prevention through common-sense gun control legislation. Despite a deserved focus and concern about potential chaos and incitement by gun control opponents and white supremacist militias on Monday, our position on guns and gun violence remain firm. We support:

- Universal background checks
- A ban on assault weapons including suppressors and bump stocks
- Reinstating the “one-gun-a-month” law
- Child access prevention programs
- A requirement for individuals to report lost or stolen firearms
- Allow localities to ban guns from municipal buildings and parks
- Red flag laws

We also urge the public to take time to learn more about the impact of gun violence on youth and teens. Included in the linked report from Everytown for Gun Safety are the following facts:

- Firearms are the second leading cause of death in the U.S. for children and teens.
- there have been at least 405 incidents of gunfire on school grounds from 2013 to 2018.

With thousands of gun control opponents expected on Monday, reports of potential incitements to violence by white supremacist militias and a state of emergency declared by the Governor this weekend, the Peace Center shares the concerns of many that the Capitol may not be safe for in-person advocacy and action and will not be convening any actions there. In light of these still-emerging developments and our core work of building just, inclusive and non-violent communities, the Peace Center:

- Calls on all those engaged in protests this coming Monday, but especially those who arm themselves with lethal weapons, to remain peaceful.
- Encourage our members and the greater Richmond community
  - to stand together in our diversity,
  - to look out for our neighbors Monday and to stay safe,
  - to celebrate the increased diversity of representation within the General Assembly as more Muslims and people of color are elected to seats and
  - to support legislative opportunities for common-sense gun control and the option of removing monuments to leaders of the Confederacy that will lead to a more just and non-violent commonwealth.
For those seeking alternatives to in-person lobbying as a way to take action, please consider the following:

- Call or email your representatives to support the gun control measures for which many of you rallied this past summer during the Governor’s special session. You can use the 'Who's my Legislator Tool' to find your Senator and or Delegates office line and contact information.

- Check here for a quick review of what bills have already moved forward from committee. We also commend to you the voice of the Virginia Center for Public Safety's, whose leadership includes Andy Goddard and Lori Haas, honored for their tireless advocacy as the Peace Center’s 2012 Peacemakers of the Year.

In doing these things, we can occupy the spirit of Dr. King’s vision of a “beloved community,” even as physical presence at the Capitol this MLK day may feel unsafe for many within our community.