



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

January 17, 2019

The Honorable Christopher Murphy

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Murphy:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to thank you for introducing the “Background Check Expansion Act” (S. 42) and to express our support for this legislation.

Catholic health care providers have seen first-hand the devastating effects of gun violence in our nation. In the most recent annual statistics provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 39,773 gun deaths in 2017. That represents an increase of over 1,000 gun-related deaths from the year before and was the third consecutive year that the rate of firearm deaths rose in the United States. These shocking figures are representative of a true public health emergency on par with our nation’s suicide and substance use disorder epidemics. Our Catholic tradition calls on us to carry out the Church’s mission in caring for everyone from conception to natural death, and far too many lives have been taken away too soon by gun violence. As the U.S. bishops said in their pastoral statement, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*, we should support legislative measures and sensible regulations that make the use of firearms safer.

A key component for making the use of firearms safer is universal background checks for all gun purchases, a proposal supported by CHA and the other members of our coalition *Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence*. This legislation would require background checks for the sale or transfer

of all firearms. That requirement extends to all unlicensed sellers, including gun shows and online merchants. The bill also provides important exceptions that include transfers between law enforcement officers, temporarily loaning firearms for sporting and hunting events, providing firearms as gifts to family members or temporarily transferring a firearm for immediate self-defense. This would make significant progress in closing the loopholes that exist in current federal law and represent a common-sense effort by Congress to begin addressing the gun violence epidemic. With well over 80% support for universal background checks shown in recent polls, this legislation's goal also has the support of the American public.

Thank you again for introducing the Background Check Expansion Act. If you have any questions or need further information about CHA's support for this legislation, please feel free to contact me or a member of our advocacy staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO