

Carleton College
300 North College Street, Northfield, MN, 55057

March 15, 2018

Representative Jason Lewis
State Office
2805 Cliff Road
Suite 200
Burnsville, MN 55337

Dear Representative Lewis,

We are writing to you as students of Carleton College in Minnesota's Second District. As concerned students at a time when student safety across the country is being threatened in unprecedented ways due to gun violence, we urge you to support Bill H.F. 3022. This bill would position Minnesota as a leader in thwarting an epidemic of domestic terrorism.

Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death.¹ However, there has been a history of denying it as a public health issue, like in 1996 when Congress passed the "Dickey Amendment" forbidding the CDC from researching gun violence "to promote gun control."² The NRA fears research like this, as one study found that having a gun in the house increases the rates of suicide and homicide. Because of all this push against research, there is a lack of a concrete understanding of the causes of gun violence. Compared to many other countries, the gun laws in the US are extremely lax and there is also more of a presence of guns in US culture, particularly in rural areas. Many gun supporters use the libertarian idea that laws would just cause a rise in the black market of guns and not prevent any violence. The reality is that in many other countries, stricter gun laws have worked. In Australia, after a mass shooting that killed thirty-five in 1996, the National Agreement on Firearms was pushed through the government, banning semi-automatic rifles, instituting a registration and licensing program, and implementing a temporary gun buyback program.³ The United States needs to take a stand against gun violence, and the bill H.F. 3022 is an excellent first step in that process. Gun control has become an

¹ American Public Health Association, "Gun Violence": <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/gun-violence>
"U.S. Guns kill more than 38,000 people and cause nearly 85,000 injuries each year"

² Zhang, Sarah "Why Can't the U.S. Treat Guns as a Public Health Problem?" *The Atlantic*, February 15, 2018.
"The actual amendment sponsored by Jay Dickey, a congressman from Arkansas, did not explicitly forbid research into gun-related deaths, just advocacy. But the Congress also lowered the CDC's budget by the exact amount it spent on such research. Message received. It's had a chilling effect on the entire field for decades."

³ Masters, Jonathan "U.S. Gun Policy: Global Comparisons" *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 14, 2017.

especially important issue in the past two decades, as the average of 6.4 incidents of mass shootings per year from 2000-2007 rose to an average of 16.4 per year from 2007-2013.⁴

This bill would be effective because it directly targets the aspects of current gun legislation that make it easier for violent individuals to possess a gun. Section 13 of the proposed bill protects the public by adjusting who can have ammunition, a pistol or semi-automatic military-style assault weapon or, (with exceptions) any other firearm. Those who have a history of violence and violence related to a mental illness are restricted from gun access. In section 13, the bill defines these individuals as those who have been committed in due to being considered “dangerous to the public” because of mental health issues or other developmental disabilities. It is important to note the specificity because it does not deny gun access to anyone who has a mental illness or is developmentally disabled, rather those who have demonstrated a potential for future violence. It also does not restrict non-violent citizens from obtaining guns, but rather protects the public from potentially violent individuals. Another important aspect of this law is that it prohibits assault weapons (Section 30), and defines assault weapons by the functions they possess. Assault weapons are the weapons used most commonly in our deadliest mass shootings in the U.S., used in the shootings in Newton, Orlando, San Bernardino, and Las Vegas. On data from 1982-2012, more than half of the guns used in mass shootings were assault weapons.⁵ Specifically, this bill prohibits large-capacity magazines (Section 31), which according to a database of information on mass shootings, made up 42 of the 143 kinds of guns involved in the mass shootings from 1982-2012. Also, according to a study done by the Washington Post on October 1, 2017, 167 of 292 guns used by mass shooters were obtained legally.⁶ We must, as a state, protect our public and ensure that violent individuals will not continue to harm innocent Minnesotans with legally obtained weapons.

Gun control is an important issue to Minnesota’s 2nd District and it is important to us because we are among thousands of K-12 and college students who reside in your district. According to U.S. Census Bureau Information, as of 2016, 179,798 members of Minnesota’s 2nd Congressional District were enrolled in school. Although many students still enrolled in school cannot yet vote, their safety is important to their parents, and those adults closest to them. It is also important to note that most mass shootings occur in places of commerce or educational environments. According to an FBI study done in 2012, at least 70% of incidences of mass shootings occur in either of these two environments and that figure has likely increased since then.⁷

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, FBI Investigation “A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013”, Washington Navy Yard, Washington D.C., 2013. pp.6

⁵ Lee, Follman, & Aronsen “More than Half of Mass Shooters Used Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Magazines” *Mother Jones*, February 27, 2013.

⁶ Berkowitz, Lu & Alcantara “The Terrible Numbers that Grow with each Mass Shooting” *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2018.

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, FBI Investigation “A Study of Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Between 2000 and 2013”, Washington Navy Yard, Washington D.C., 2013. pp.6

There really is very little need for members of the public to have access to military-grade weapons. These weapons were created to kill many people quickly and their prevalence in the United State is a threat to all citizens. One particularly scary aspect of the recent Parkland School Shooting in Florida was the fact that the shooter still had 150 rounds of ammunition left in his AR-15 rifle when his gun jammed and he fled the scene by blending in with the students. It is terrifying to think how many more could have been murdered at his hands.

Thus, we urge you to not only to support H.F. 3022 but also to act in respect for your constituents. Gun violence is an issue at the forefront of the American consciousness right now - complacency in the face of domestic terror will leave our community on the wrong side of history. We eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

Ilan Friedland '21
Marlena Resnick '21
Sophie Rogers '21
Justine Seligson '19
Jackie Tyson '20