Keeping Guns from High Risk Individuals Act (H.R. 226): The Epidemic of Seizing Gun Violence

The Honorable Robin Kelly
1239 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

January 31st, 2015

Dear Representative Kelly:

As the upcoming generation, we are writing to address the need for safer gun control in the United States of America. In order to implement this measure, we urge you to yes for the 114th Congress’s House Bill H.R. 226, the “Keeping Guns from High Risk Individuals Act.” This significant legislation has been introduced as a response to the increasing epidemic of national gun violence. The bill includes a four-part series of restrictions on persons who: (1) have been convicted of a crime of violence in the previous 10 years, (2) are under age 25 and have been adjudicated as having committed an offense deemed a crime of violence committed by an adult, (3) have been convicted on two separate occasions in any period of three consecutive years in the last ten years of an offense that has the possession or distribution of alcohol or a controlled substance as an element, and/or (4) have been convicted of stalking. Furthermore, the bill’s recent introduction does not depict the exacerbated existence of this problem. In the year 2014, the total number of incidents involving firearms was a staggering 51,351 and 12,578 resulted in death.

Effects of Improper Gun Ownership

We believe the prevailing issue of gun violence needs attention. Research regarding H.R. 226 found that improper usage of guns has a long lasting effect on families, children, and communities. Overall, about a third of all Americans with children under 18 at home have a gun in their household, including 34% of families with children younger than 12; thus, leading to easier accessibility for children to be in possession of a firearm. On December 8th, 2014 in Chicago, where I grew up, I remember the tragic story of Michael Cattron III, a 6 year old boy, who was fatally shot in the head due to the accidental possession of his dad’s firearm, which was not registered, while watching cartoons with his cousins. Michael’s father found his son lying in

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1 https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/226?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22h.r.+226%22%5D%7D
2 http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/tolls/2014
a pool of his own blood. These incidents have become an everyday tragedy that must be stopped. Many American families possess deadly firearm weapons in their homes, with some of these guns being registered and some unregistered.

Ultimately, improper gun ownership has resulted in vast American casualties. The matter is how have fellow Americans acquired such possession of firearms and for what reasons? In 2013, about half (48%) of gun owners said the main reason they owned a gun was for protection and the other three-in-ten (32%) said they owned a gun for hunting. Despite, these statistics, there is an influx of guns that are unregistered and used for harmful reasons. Several states such as New Jersey, Nevada, Louisiana, Missouri, and Mississippi do not require licensure to own a firearm. This further proves that the root of the issue begins with policy at the state level, but states have proven ineffective at passing their own legislation. There must be a systematic and common solution to this problem. We believe the answer is HR 226.

Community Ties

Gun possession and subsequent violence affects community stabilization in many areas, whether urban, suburban, or rural, including my hometown of Chicago, IL. The year 2013 impacted the view of the city’s reputation upon the nation, after the July 4th violence. Your involvement in addressing the concerns of the Chicago community due to the July 4th violence that year shows me that you embrace better gun control. Your statement that African-American “don’t feel free to sit on their porch steps, they don’t feel free to go play in the park, or walk to the store and send their kids to school,” reiterates the effects of continuous gun violence within the community as well as demonstrates your concern. Although, it is important to note that, while the media portrays that this problem is solely in the African American community, it is also quite prevalent in both Hispanic and Caucasian communities.

Blacks are only about half as likely as whites to have a firearm in their home (41% vs 19%). Hispanics are less likely than blacks to be gun homicide victims and half as likely as whites to have a gun at home (20%). Thus, the other 20% pertains to various diverse ethnicities that possess the likelihood of owning firearms within their homes or actively using them. The impact of weak gun control centers on the issue of private sales. An article by Americanpress.org states that 40 percent of the gun transfers occurring each year occur with more than six million gun transfers originating from private sellers, which leads to these sellers selling weaponry at gun shows or selling guns online, often without permits, allowing former convicts, felons, mentally unstable persons, gang members, and even minors to purchase weapons. This increases the number of violent guns used in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

4 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2865513/Boy-6-dies-accidentally-shoots-head-watching-cartoons.html
6 https://www.nraila.org/gun-laws/
9 https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/civil-liberties/report/2013/01/12/49510/preventing-gun-violence-in-our-nation/
Vote Yes on H.R. 226

Although, the 2nd Amendment of the United States Constitution states: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep bear Arms, shall not be infringed,” 10 we believe that right specifically pertains to the controlled “regulated” accessibility of both owning and having freedom to possess a gun. Citizens must understand the importance of this right and treat it with the respects as a privilege. We believe it is imperative to protect the upcoming generation. Already in 2015, there have been 3,417 incidents occurring with 1,034 deaths, a rate of 30%, due to gun violence.11 H.R. 226 is the essential beginning to a better future for all Americans, especially children. Help change the societal norm of tragic stories like Michael Catron III and help sustain future generations to come.

Sincerely,

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10 http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment
11 http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/