



June 8, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to urge the immediate passage of H.R. 7910, the Protecting Our Kids Act, a comprehensive set of measures to prevent gun violence in this country. Firearms-related violence continues to be a public health crisis in the United States that requires the nation's immediate attention. We support measures in the Protecting Our Kids Act to reduce gun violence by raising the age to purchase certain firearms, increasing penalties for gun trafficking, supporting safer storage of firearms, banning large capacity magazines, and strengthening measures to prevent the use of ghost guns.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 161,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, and compassion to the preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

The recent mass shootings in Buffalo, Uvalde, and Tulsa, among others, show that Congress can no longer afford to wait to act to protect our citizens from the ongoing threat of additional firearms-related violence. ACP is concerned about not only the alarming number of mass shootings in the United States but also the daily toll of firearm violence in neighborhoods, homes, workplaces, and public and private places across the country. According to the most recent [data](#) published by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "in 2020, there were 45,222 firearm-related deaths in the United States – that's about 124 people dying from a firearm-related injury each day. More than half of firearm-related deaths were suicides and more than 4 out of every 10 were firearm homicides."

For more than two decades, ACP has called for common sense policies that would help reduce the number of injuries and deaths stemming from firearms. In 2019, ACP joined with 41 other leading organizations in a joint [call-to-action](#) that called for evidence-based solutions to mitigate firearms violence. We are pleased that many of the proposals included in our most [recent policy paper](#) on firearms violence prevention were also included in the Protecting Our Kids Act and we call on Congress to act **now** to pass the following policies to reduce the danger of injury and death from gun violence.

## **RAISE THE LAWFUL AGE TO PURCHASE A SEMIAUTOMATIC CENTERFIRE RIFLE FROM 18 TO 21 YEARS OLD**

One strategy that we recommend to accomplish this goal would be to enact legislation to ban the manufacture, sale, transfer, and subsequent ownership for civilian use of semi-automatic firearms that are designed to increase their rapid killing capacity (often called “assault weapons”) and their large capacity magazines and retain the current ban on automatic weapons for civilian use. Only as an interim step toward a complete ban, ACP supports a provision in H.R. 7910 that would raise the age from 18 to 21 for an individual to purchase a semi-automatic rifle, such as an AR-15, that has or can accept a magazine of five rounds or more. It would provide an exemption for active-duty military and full-time law enforcement officers who wish to purchase a semi-automatic rifle. We remain concerned that the gunman in the recent mass shooting in Uvalde was able to purchase two assault rifles and large quantities of ammunition when he turned 18. ACP was pleased to [support](#) legislation known as the Raise the Age Act that would raise the age for the purchase of semiautomatic rifles from 18 to 21.

## **INCREASE PENALTIES FOR THE IMPORT, SALE, MANUFACTURE, TRANSFER, OR POSSESSION OF LARGE CAPACITY MAGAZINES**

The Protecting Our Kids Act would establish a new federal offense that would increase penalties, including additional fines or imprisonment, for the import, sale, manufacture, transfer, **or possession of large capacity magazines, with exceptions for certain law enforcement uses and the possession (but not sale) of grandfathered magazines.** Our policy supports the enactment of legislation to ban the manufacture, sale, transfer, and subsequent ownership for civilian use of large capacity magazines and retaining the current ban on automatic weapons for civilian use. A ban on large capacity magazines such as devices that accelerate the rate of fire of a semiautomatic firearm, can be useful so that the shooter could be disarmed, arrested, or subdued by police before greater numbers of individuals are injured or killed by these weapons.

## **INCREASE PENALTIES FOR GUN TRAFFICKING AND STRAW PURCHASERS**

We are pleased that H.R. 7910 would establish new federal offenses for gun trafficking and straw purchasers and authorize the seizure of the property and proceeds of the offense. The College favors strong penalties and criminal prosecution for those who sell firearms illegally and those who legally purchase firearms for those who are banned from possessing them (“straw purchases”). Straw purchasers—persons who unlawfully purchase firearms for others who are in a prohibited category—move several thousand firearms into criminal channels each year, and [penalties for such purchasers must be strong](#) as included in this legislation to reduce gun violence from this practice.

## **INCREASE FIREARM SAFETY THROUGH BEST PRACTICES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR SAFE FIREARM STORAGE**

We support provisions in this legislation that would establish voluntary best practices for safe firearms storage, award grants for Safe Firearm Storage Assistance Programs, as well as requirements to

regulate the storage of firearms on residential premises. This legislation would create criminal penalties for individuals who do not adhere to federal requirements for safe firearms storage in their homes.

Firearm owners should adhere to best practices to reduce the risk of accidental or intentional injuries or deaths from firearms. They should ensure that their firearms cannot be accessed by children, adolescents, people with dementia, people with substance use disorders, and the subset of people with serious mental illnesses that are associated with greater risk of harming themselves and others. ACP supports child access prevention laws that hold firearm owners accountable for the safe storage of firearms. A disproportionately large share of unintentional firearm fatalities was found to occur in states where gunowners were more likely to store their firearms loaded. The greatest [risk](#) occurred in states where loaded firearms were more likely to be stored unlocked. Parents of adolescents, who have the [highest risk](#) for firearm-related injuries among youths, were found to be more likely than parents of younger children to un-safely store household firearms (42% vs. 29%).

### **BAN THE MANUFACTURE, SALE, OR POSSESSION OF BUMP STOCKS FOR CIVILIAN USE**

We are grateful that the Protecting Our Kids Act would build on the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) regulation by banning the use of bump stocks under federal law. Although evidence on the effectiveness of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban is limited, ACP believes that there is sufficient evidence that appropriate legislation and regulation to limit the future manufacture, sale, transfer, and possession of weapons that are designed to increase their rapid killing capacity, along with a ban on large capacity magazines and such devices as bump stocks that accelerate the rate of fire of a semiautomatic firearm, can be effective in reducing casualties in mass shootings. A recent study shows “[growing evidence](#) that state level restrictions on large capacity magazines reduce mass shootings.”

### **INCREASE RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF GHOST GUNS**

We are pleased that this legislation strengthens a recent rule issued by the ATF to help reduce the number of unmarked and hard-to-trace “ghost guns”. Ghost guns are unregulated firearms that anyone, including minors and prohibited purchasers can buy without a background check. These firearms do not include a serial number and can be purchased online and assembled at home. The rule establishes requirements for federally licensed firearms dealers and gunsmiths to run background checks on anyone who wishes to purchase a gun kit to have a serial number added to 3D printed guns or other un-serialized firearms they take into inventory.

The Protecting Our Kids Act builds on the ATF ghost gun regulation by codifying the existing regulation into a federal law by requiring that individuals who purchase a gun kit are subject to a federal background check and that all ghost guns are engraved with a serial number.

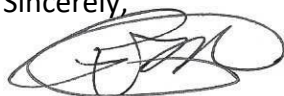
ACP [supports efforts](#) to limit the proliferation of ghost guns as they are consistent with the types of recommendations ACP put forward in our 2018 policy paper “Reducing Firearm-Related Injuries and Deaths in the U.S.” In the paper, ACP offered evidence-based recommendations to reduce firearms-

related deaths and injuries. The College supports law enforcement measures, including required use of tracer elements or taggants on ammunition and weapons, and identifying markings, such as serial numbers on weapons, to aid in the identification of weapons used in crimes.

### **Conclusion**

Physicians are on the front lines of caring for patients affected by intentional or unintentional firearm-related injury. We care for those who experience a lifetime of physical and mental disability related to firearms-related injury and provide support for families affected by firearms-related injury and death. We urge Congress to act now on these policies that we know could mitigate gun violence and reduce the proliferation of firearms and weapons that inflict significant injuries and deaths to our patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Mire", enclosed within a large, loopy oval scribble.

Ryan D. Mire, MD, FACP  
President