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TIM RYAN

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
13TH DISTRICT, OHIO
April 13, 2018

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
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DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE
MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS,
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Dear Fred:

Thank you for contacting me with your thoughts on gun control. Our nation has endured so many tragedies—Columbine, Newtown, Las Vegas, Aurora, Orlando, Sutherland Springs, Tucson, Charleston, Parkland, and countless more. We see that horrific acts of gun violence can happen anywhere, to anyone. As the young students in Florida have courageously said, the time for thoughts and prayers has passed. It is time for Congress to act. We must reject the notion that life in the United States means having to accept mass shootings as a common occurrence.

First let me be clear, I do not support the NRA. There is no doubt that the NRA is less of an advocate for gun owners and more of a promoter of the gun industry. Its refusal to consider even the most basic, common-sense gun safety reforms is extreme. I broke completely with the NRA after their non-response to the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School and their opposition to universal background checks. Last year, I made my position even more obvious by supporting such groups as Sandy Hook Promise, Americans for Responsible Solutions and Everytown for Gun Safety.

As someone who enjoys hunting and shooting, I support the Second Amendment and the rights of responsible, law-abiding gun owners. However, there are several steps Congress can take to keep Americans safe while honoring the Second Amendment. I support greater accountability for gun owners and the implementation of universal background checks for all gun sales, including private transfers between friends and family. Congress should also increase funding for the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, so the records are sufficiently updated to provide timely and accurate background checks.

I also support a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault weapons. Semi-automatic rifles and pistols with military-grade features have no place in the hands of civilians. At the same time, we must make it harder for these mass killing technologies, such as bump stocks, to be obtained. That is why I am proud to cosponsor H.R. 3947, the Automatic Gunfire Prevention Act, which would prohibit the possession or transfer of certain firearm accessories that enable mass shootings.

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The need for reform does not stop there. We also need to overturn the Dickey Amendment, a 1996 law that prevents the Centers for Disease Control from conducting research on gun violence. States should be allowed to enact legislation permitting gun violence restraining orders, which would allow a court to temporarily take guns away from abusive partners, convicted stalkers, and those at risk of harming themselves or others. And we need to make gun trafficking a federal crime. Congress has the power to enact sensible reforms that would keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a threat to public safety. It is time for my Republican colleagues to get on board with these changes.

In addition to stricter policies, we also need to make a greater investment in mental health. As Co-Chair of the Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, I understand how important it is to raise awareness about mental health issues, eliminate the stigma associated with getting help, and increase access to treatment. I have consistently pushed for adequate funding for programs that allow people to get the help they need. I was proud to vote for the Mental Health Parity Act and the Addiction Equity Act, two bills that ensure coverage limits, co-payments, and out-of-network coverage for mental health are no different than for other health services.

No parent, child, friend, or teacher should be forced to worry about their safety or the safety of their loved ones while going about their daily lives. I am tired of offering my condolences to the victims of senseless violence only to have even more lives shattered just days, weeks, or months later. I am inspired by the smart and fearless students all over the country speaking out about this issue. It is time for Congress to act accordingly. I am hopeful that Republicans and Democrats can work together on common-sense reforms that will keep firearms out of the hands of violent criminals, terrorists, and the mentally ill. Rest assured I will continue to speak out on the need for my colleagues to address these serious issues. Thank you again for your correspondence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Ryan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

TR:rj