

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell:

National PTA is the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association in the United States, with congresses in all 50 states, DC, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Department of Defense Schools in Europe. For over 120 years, National PTA has been a strong advocate for children's health and well-being. Unfortunately, the safety of America's children is under threat due to the epidemic of gun violence sweeping our country. Ending this violence is among our association's highest priorities. For this reason, we urge you to bring the Background Check Expansion Act (S. 42) to the floor for a vote and to support its passage.

Firearms are the second leading cause of death among children and teens, with nearly 1,600 young lives lost to gun-related homicide every year.¹ And the impact doesn't end there—millions more experience the trauma of witnessing gun violence. As parents and advocates for children, National PTA is committed to ending the scourge of gun violence and ensuring our children's safety. While there is no single solution to the crisis of gun violence in our country, we can all agree that it is essential to prevent individuals who intend to do harm from obtaining a firearm.

However, current law allows private or unlicensed vendors to sell guns without conducting a background check on the purchaser. Because of this loophole, up to 25% of gun sales in this country occur without a background check. This is unacceptable. Implementing comprehensive background checks before every gun sale would save thousands of lives, by keeping guns out of the hands of those who should not have them.

The Background Check Expansion Act would make our schools and communities safer by requiring a background check for virtually every firearm sale and transfer—a common-sense measure supported by 97% of Americans. The bill includes reasonable exceptions like transfers among close family members and short-term gun loans among hunters and sport shooters. The legislation does nothing to impede lawful gun purchases and closes off a wide and well-known pathway for illegal transactions by prohibited, and often dangerous, buyers.

The House has already acted to address this national crisis by passing the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8). Now it is up to the Senate. Countless lives are at stake.

¹ Everytown for Gun Safety (2018). Gun violence in America. New York, NY



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We urge you to bring this common-sense legislation to the floor and facilitate its passage in the Senate as an initial step towards addressing our nation's gun violence epidemic and protecting America's children and families.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you require additional information about National PTA's views on gun safety and violence prevention or other issues, please contact Jacki Ball, Director of Government Affairs, at jball@PTA.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Carrell Boggs".

Leslie Carrell Boggs
President
National PTA

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nathan R. Monell".

Nathan R. Monell, CAE
Executive Director
National PTA