



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG

June 23, 2022

Dear Senator/Representative:

On June 3, [we wrote to Congress](#) calling for lawmakers to “unite in their humanity to stop the massacres of human lives” and to advance life-saving legislation that will address the epidemic of gun violence in our nation. We write to endorse S. 2938, the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and ask you to support this legislation when it comes before you. We are particularly heartened by key provisions of this legislation, which include:

- Strengthening state crisis intervention programs, including extreme risk protection order programs;
- Funding to help schools prevent violence, including mental health initiatives, and access to equitable services for non-public schools;
- Strengthening the integrity of background checks and protecting victims of domestic violence by closing the so-called ‘boyfriend loophole’;
- Enhancing reviews of gun purchasers under the age of 21;
- Addressing weapons trafficking including by specifically prohibiting straw purchasing and firearm trafficking and providing tools to investigate, prosecute, and educate around these offenses;
- Investing in children and family mental health services, improving access to mental health care, earlier interventions, and suicide prevention; and
- Clarifying the definition of a firearm dealer to make it more difficult to evade licensing and background check requirements.

For many years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has supported several reasonable measures to address the problem of gun violence and continues to support efforts by the U.S. Congress to advance these policies in legislation.¹ Nearly three decades ago, when we published a pastoral document entitled “[Confronting a Culture of Violence](#)” (1994), we lamented, “a nation born in a commitment to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ is haunted by death, imprisoned by fear, and caught up in the elusive spirit of protection rather than happiness... it doesn’t have to be this way. It was not always this way.” We hold that “respect for human life is the starting point for confronting a culture of violence.”²

Your work to confront a culture of violence must continue, and, going forward, we reiterate our support for a federal extreme risk protection order, a total ban on assault weapons, a ban on ‘bump stocks,’ limitations on civilian access to high-capacity weapons and ammunition magazines, and a more appropriate minimum age for gun ownership. We also support measures that control the sale and use of firearms, such as universal background checks for all gun purchases. Moreover, recognizing that many of the perpetrators of mass violence in schools have experienced childhood trauma including familial instability and suffering or witnessing physical


¹ [A Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence](#).

² [Confronting a Culture of Violence](#), no. 1.

abuse, emotional abuse, or substance abuse,³ we strongly encourage all manner of policies to be crafted to support cultivation of strong family life.

We are grateful to those senators who led bipartisan negotiations to produce this meaningful legislation that will serve as an important first step towards keeping our children safe and reducing gun violence, including mass murder, suicides, and homicides. May the Prince of Peace rule your hearts, and “may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way” (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

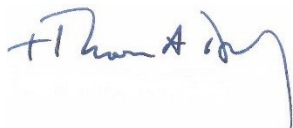
Sincerely,



Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development



Most Reverend Salvatore J. Cordileone
Archbishop of San Francisco
Chairman, Committee on Laity,
Marriage, Family Life and Youth



Most Reverend Thomas Daly
Bishop of Spokane
Chairman, Committee on Catholic Education



Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore
Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

³ Langman, P., [“School Shooters: The Myth of the Stable Home.”](#)