

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



**HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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June 23, 2016

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings  
2230 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

I am writing to express my heartfelt and enthusiastic support of the sit-in protest held by you and the Democratic members of the House of Representatives which called for a vote on common sense gun violence prevention legislation in the wake of the horrific tragedy in Orlando. As always, you have demonstrated exemplary service and leadership. I am sincerely grateful for your strong efforts to address this threat head-on. Your voice is a powerful force in advancing the health for our city and nation.

We know the terrible statistics. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, guns kill more than 31,000 people each year in the U.S., including more than 11,000 homicides. The U.S. homicide rate is seven times the average of other high-income countries. In Baltimore, we just experienced the deadliest year on record with 344 homicides in 2015.

As the doctor for the City of Baltimore and an emergency physician who has treated patients with gunshot wounds, I have no doubt that gun violence is a public health crisis. People are dying. We know how to treat people who have been shot, but we need to prevent that bullet wound in the first place. We have to save lives.

Experts across our country agree. Earlier this year, 141 of the nation's leading medical and public health groups, including the American Medical Association and American Public Health Association, representing over 1 million health professional across the country, agreed that gun violence is a threat to public health that must be urgently addressed.

In Baltimore, public health approaches—like violence interruption and prevention—have been proven effective year after year. In 2015, our Safe Streets program mediated nearly 700 conflicts, about 80 percent of which were deemed “likely” or “very likely” to result in gun violence. That is as many as 700 murders prevented by treating violence as a disease.

Evidence and science must guide policy. Common sense restrictions on gun ownership will safeguard our communities. Unlike so many medical ailments that do not have a cure or a vaccine, with gun violence, we have the power to make change, prevent injury, and save our citizens.

I applaud you and our Democratic leaders in Congress for their bold actions and thank you for your continued leadership. If I can further support your efforts, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would be honored to advocate by your side in pursuit of “higher ground, not common ground.”

The time for action is now. I stand with you in pursuit of a safer nation.

Sincerely,

Leana Wen, M.D., M.Sc.  
Commissioner of Health, Baltimore City

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