June 10, 2013

The Honorable Jack Kingston  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, HHS and Education  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, HHS and Education  
2358 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The Tri-Council for Nursing, comprising the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Nurses Association, the American Organization of Nurse Executives, and the National League for Nursing, respectfully requests $10 million to support Gun Violence Prevention Research at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and $23.570 million for CDC’s National Violent Death Reporting System in FY 2014.

The Tri-Council is a long-standing nursing alliance focused on leadership and excellence in the nursing profession. As the largest single group of health care professionals, nurses witness the fatalities and injuries sustained from gun violence as well as the trauma of individuals, families, and communities impacted by such vehemence. Violence is a serious public health problem in the United States. From infants to the elderly, it affects people in all stages of life. In 2010, 16,259 people were victims of homicide and over double that number (38,364) took their own life. Of these deaths, nearly 56 percent were caused by discharge of a firearm, i.e., 11,078 homicides and 19,392 suicides. The number of violent deaths tells only part of the story. Many more survive violence and are left with permanent physical and emotional scars. This violence also erodes communities by reducing productivity and disrupting services.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is committed to stopping public health problems before they begin. CDC began studying patterns of violence in the early 1980s after the U.S. Surgeon General identified violent behavior as a key public health priority. Applying science for real-world solutions to keep people safe, healthy, and productive, CDC’s work in violence and injury prevention involves:

- Describing and monitoring violence-related behaviors, injuries, and deaths;
- Conducting research to understand the factors that increase risk or protect people from violence;
- Creating violence prevention programs and evaluating their effectiveness;
Conducting research on the effective adoption and dissemination of prevention strategies; and
Helping state and local partners plan, implement, and evaluate prevention programs.

Though a strong foundation has been laid, for years the CDC has been stymied from conducting significant research on the health problem of gun violence. The need to document and monitor gun violence and identify effective programs and policies through research remains critically important. To that end the Tri-Council respectfully requests the following funding for CDC in FY 2014:

$10 million for a new CDC initiative to support Gun Violence Prevention Research.
As stated in the President’s budget proposal for CDC, topics will follow the research agenda currently being developed with external partners and will address questions aimed at understanding the characteristics of gun violence, the risk and protective factors associated with firearm violence, and the role of violent video and violent media content on behavior. CDC will make funds available to strengthen existing data systems for gun research and otherwise support research into the causes and prevention of gun violence through a competitive, peer-review process, funding approximately 10 to 15 three- to five-year competitive grants and cooperative agreements. This research will be used to inform decision making about programs and policies to reduce violence and injuries, facilitating wise investments of prevention resources.

$23.570 million to expand nationwide CDC’s National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS).
The NVDRS currently supports only 18 states. As recent events in Colorado, Wisconsin, and Connecticut highlight, the challenge of reducing violent deaths remains even though budgets tighten. Unfortunately, most communities lack data about the circumstances surrounding these deaths. An issue of particular concern is the alarming high rate of suicides among active and former military personnel. Knowing the full extent of all firearm injuries and deaths is crucial to state and local communities for understanding the how and when firearms are used in violent deaths and for shaping future research. An enhanced NVDRS program will provide states and communities with vital information to better track and implement effective prevention strategies to reduce future firearm injuries that occur in different types of violent death – suicides, homicides, and unintentional shootings.

While gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the United States, it is not inevitable; rather, it is a preventable public health problem. Yet, unlike other preventable causes of death, we have not addressed gun violence sufficiently to research root causes and community solutions. The Tri-Council for Nursing urges the Subcommittee to adequately fund
the CDC to develop its infrastructure so it can track, assess, and develop strategies to prevent gun violence. We look forward to working with you in ending this cycle of preventable violence, death, and trauma.

If you require additional information, please feel free to contact Kathleen A. Ream, NLN's government affairs director, at 571-213-5662 or via email at kream@nln.org.

Sincerely yours,

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Cc: Members, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS and Education

A similar letter was transmitted to the Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies on June 10, 2013.