



February 26, 2019

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence (FUPGV), a diverse multi-faith coalition represented by more than 50 faith-based organizations and denominations who are united by the call of our faiths to confront America's gun violence epidemic, is writing to express our support for the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019, H.R. 8. In the wake of seemingly endless gun violence, our faith communities urge Congress to do more than offer thoughts and prayers; as a society we have a moral obligation to enact meaningful and substantive reforms. H.R. 8 represents a crucial first step that Congress must take in order to reduce the 96 deaths per day caused by guns and make our communities safer.

Under current federal law, only licensed gun dealers are required to conduct a background check before completing a gun sale. However, individuals and unlicensed sellers, like those at gun shows or online, can sell firearms without completing a background check. This gap accounts for approximately 22% of all gun purchases and allows individuals who are prohibited from owning a gun, like domestic abusers and persons with violent criminal histories, to avoid the law and purchase firearms through other means. H.R. 8 closes this gap and prevents these individuals from having easy access to firearms. This simple step would save thousands of lives.

Universal background checks have been proven to work. For example:

- Since the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was created in 1997 to the end of 2017, background checks prevented more than 3 million gun sales or transfers.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017 alone, NICS prevented approximately 181,000 attempted gun purchases because the individual trying to buy the gun was prohibited from owning one.<sup>2</sup>
- It's been demonstrated that up to 80 percent of firearms used in crimes are obtained without a background check.<sup>3</sup>

Our faiths call us to create a safer world, where we can participate in everyday activities like going to school, attending a concert, or praying in our houses of worship without the fear of violent death. It does not have to be taken for granted that violence will erupt in our public spaces and communities. We do not have to continue to accept that people will die from accidental and intentional gun deaths. For too long, gun violence in our communities has been ignored and Congress has turned a deaf ear to the many voices clamoring for change. We urge swift passage of H.R. 8 as a critical first step toward addressing gun violence.

Sincerely,

Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence

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<sup>1</sup> <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/background-checks/universal-background-checks/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/background-checks/universal-background-checks/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/19/1/26.short>