

# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

W W W . A A C A P . O R G

February 25, 2019

The Honorable Michael Thompson  
406 Cannon House Office Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Thompson:

On behalf of the 9,400 physician members of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), I write in support of your legislation, H.R. 8, the "*Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019*." Your bipartisan bill would require that unlicensed firearms sellers utilize the current background checks process in the United States to ensure individuals prohibited from gun possession are not able to obtain firearms.

As you know, federal law prohibits certain people, such as felons and domestic abusers, from obtaining or possessing firearms. This law is primarily enforced through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). While licensed gun dealers are required to contact NICS when they attempt to sell or transfer a firearm, current law contains a loophole. Presently, unlicensed sellers can sell guns at gun shows, online, and person-to-person, without conducting any background checks on the purchaser. Your legislation would close this loophole and prevent guns from getting into the hands of those who should not have them.

Child and adolescent psychiatrists have been active in advocating for reasonable firearm policies. As a matter of policy, "AACAP believes that the most effective measure to help prevent firearm-related deaths and injuries to children and adolescents is to reduce the presence of guns in homes and communities. This is particularly critical for homes or families in which the threat of personal violence exists. AACAP encourages the strict enforcement of existing laws pertaining to the purchase, ownership, and storage of firearms, as well as mandatory background checks for all transactions related to gun ownership, and other initiatives designed to protect children and reduce the incidence of gun-related violence."

AACAP strongly supports this legislation and looks forward to working with you and your staff to ensure its timely passage. AACAP is the leading national professional medical association dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for children, adolescents, and families affected by emotional, behavioral, developmental, and mental disorders.

Sincerely,



Karen D. Wagner, MD, PhD  
President