December 19, 2017

The Honorable John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cornyn and Murphy:

On behalf of the American Public Health Association, a diverse community of public health professionals that champions the health of all people and communities, I write in support of the Fix NICS Act of 2017. This legislation would help prevent criminals and other dangerous individuals from getting access to firearms by ensuring a robust, comprehensive and accurate National Instant Criminal Background Check System. In the wake of the recent devastating mass shootings in Las Vegas, Nevada and the church in Southerland Springs, Texas, as well as the ongoing occurrence of gun violence throughout the nation, Congress must focus its efforts on addressing the nation’s gun violence epidemic including through legislation to improve efforts to keep prohibited individuals from gaining access to firearms.

Gun violence is a serious public health epidemic in the United States, resulting in more than 36,000 deaths in 2015. This legislation is an important step in helping reduce firearm-related deaths in the U.S. by ensuring that all relevant information is being uploaded into the NICS database. Too often, state and federal agencies are failing to properly upload this information which has resulted in dangerous individuals having access to firearms, leading to the senseless deaths of too many innocent people. Importantly, the legislation would require agencies to develop NICS implementation plans, provide technical assistance to help states ensure all relevant information is uploaded into the system and hold agencies that fail to meet these requirements accountable.

We thank you for sponsoring this legislation to improve efforts to keep firearms out of the wrong hands. We are hopeful we can continue to work with you to enact additional bipartisan commonsense solutions to reduce gun violence including requiring universal background checks for all firearm purchases and supporting federal research and public health surveillance on firearm-related injuries and fatalities.

Sincerely,

Georges C. Benjamin, MD
Executive Director