



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®

June 20, 2016

**SUPPORT THE FEINSTEIN AND MURPHY AMENDMENTS AND OPPOSE EFFORTS TO
UNDERMINE GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Dear Senator,

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) equality. On behalf of our 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to vote in support of two gun violence prevention amendments to the FY 17 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Act (H.R. 2578) by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Chris Murphy. In addition, we ask you to reject amendments that would undermine public safety and fail to address the scourge of gun violence in the United States such as those proposed by Senators John Cornyn and Chuck Grassley.

Just over one week ago, a violent individual with easy access to guns murdered 49 LGBTQ and allied people, who were mostly Latinx, injuring 53 more, in the most deadly mass shooting in our nation's history. Though details continue to emerge, and exact motives may never be known, it is clear that the murderer intentionally chose to target LGBTQ people buoyed by a culture of intolerance and hate. The horror faced by the LGBTQ communities in the wake of the Orlando massacre may be unique but the killings were not an isolated incident. According to the most recent FBI statistics, more than 20 percent of all reported hate crimes target people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity—and we know this data significantly underestimates the true scale of bias-motivated violence.

The degree of bloodshed at Pulse nightclub and many other recent mass shootings may have been avoided if the perpetrators had faced reasonable restrictions on their ability to own a gun. In most states across the country troubled individuals intent on carrying out violence can purchase assault-type weapons without a background check from an unlicensed seller, no questions asked, including in Florida. A super majority of Americans support common sense solutions to gun violence including expanded background checks.

The Feinstein and Murphy amendments strike the balance Americans are seeking in our laws regulating the sale and ownership of guns. Senator Feinstein's proposal, backed by the Department of Justice, would ensure that the Department of Justice has the authority to deny gun sales to individuals the Department has a reasonable suspicion is involved in terrorism. Senator Murphy's proposal would close the unlicensed seller loophole by requiring criminal background checks on all sales while maintaining reasonable exceptions for family, hunting, and emergency self-defense.

In contrast, the Cornyn and Grassley amendments fail to take seriously the alarming toll from gun violence. Senator Cornyn's proposal requires the Department of Justice to demonstrate knowledge that an individual will actually commit an act of terrorism in order to stop a gun sale, making the amendment useless since law enforcement officials would have sufficient evidence to arrest a person under those circumstances. Senator Grassley's proposal leaves the background check loophole wide open and actually makes it easier for individuals with severe mental illnesses to purchase guns.

America has gone too long without common sense gun laws and the number of people lost to violent gun crime grows daily. The volatile combination of animosity towards the LGBTQ community and easy access to assault-style weapons exacerbates the climate of fear and the dangers faced by LGBTQ people. Reasonable gun violence prevention measures are part of the solution to bias-motivated violence. We again urge you to vote for the Feinstein and Murphy amendments and hope you will vote against the Cornyn and Grassley amendments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Stacy".

David Stacy
Government Affairs Director