

ILLINOIS CAMPAIGN to
prevent GUN VIOLENCE
www.icpgv.org

A project of Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence

For Immediate Release

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Medical Professionals Urge State Lawmakers to Support Handgun Background Checks Common Sense Gun Laws Needed to Stem the Crippling Costs of Gun Violence

(Chicago, IL) After a spate of random shootings and gun homicides, Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (ICPGV), along with doctors and medical professionals, convened at Children's Memorial Hospital to send an urgent plea to state lawmakers to require background checks on all handgun sales in order save lives and reduce escalating health care costs related to gun violence.

This week the state legislature reconvenes in the face of an unprecedented state budget deficit, underscoring the need for lawmakers to address the financial costs of gun violence. According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, in 2008, Illinois acute care hospitals reported 1,547 cases of firearm-related hospitalizations, with an average charge of \$52,000 per hospitalization. Gun-related hospitalizations resulted in charges totaling \$80.5 million in 2008. Only one third of these hospitalizations were covered by private insurance; 40% of hospitalized gun shot victims were uninsured and 27% had public health insurance.

Contributing to this epidemic of gun violence is a dangerous loophole in Illinois law that permits dangerous individuals to access deadly handguns without ever having to undergo a criminal background check. This means that gang members, felons, domestic violence offenders, and individuals with severe mental illness are able to purchase handguns with no questions asked. Every year, thousands of guns are sold in Illinois every year through private transactions without background checks on the purchasers. A large number of these firearms, particularly handguns, end up being sold on the illegal market, a major source of crime guns.

Senate Bill 3709, sponsored by Dan Kotowski (District 33-Park Ridge), and House Bill 5480, sponsored by Harry Osterman (District 14-Chicago), would close this loophole in Illinois law. According to a recent bipartisan poll, nine out of ten Illinois voters across the state support closing the "private sale loophole."

"In addition to saving lives, there is a cost-benefit of requiring background checks for all handgun transactions. The \$10 fee for a background check compared to the \$52,000 average cost of a gun-related hospitalization shows why we desperately need to enact this law," said Mark Walsh, Campaign Director for ICPGV. "Bottom line, Illinois simply can not afford to continue to give criminals and other prohibited purchasers unquestioned access handguns."

A recent, tragic example of gun violence is Danny Gilmore, a 14-year-old freshman at Douglass Academy High School who was shot three times in front of a convenience store before going to school. He is now paralyzed and will need extensive physical therapy. Sadly, this young man's life has been upended and will never be the same.

"Our state lawmakers need to recognize the enormous injustice and waste of a young student getting shot on his way to school and care enough to stop it, said Dr. Christoffel. "To prevent kids from getting shot, we must strengthen our gun laws. There is no compelling reason to not require background checks for all handgun sales."

ICPGV, a project of Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, is a public education campaign to promote meaningful gun policy reform in Illinois.

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