



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

Statement on the Gun Violence Research Act

The MIT Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,900 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). We have consistently supported and encouraged investments in research and strongly support using research findings to inform policy decision making. On an issue as divisive as gun violence in America, we believe that research on the subject can only serve to move the debate in a positive direction.

For these reasons, **we strongly support H.R. 4573, the Gun Violence Research Act**, which clarifies the language originally inserted by the Dickey Amendment to explicitly allow federal agencies overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct and sponsor research on mental health and gun violence.

The “Dickey Amendment” was a provision first added to United States law in the 1996 omnibus appropriations bill that states “none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may be used to advocate or promote gun control.”¹ This provision was coupled with a spending reallocation for CDC in the same bill that matched the amount of funding appropriated to CDC for gun violence research in the previous year. This has widely been interpreted as a de-facto ban on gun violence research at the CDC, which had directed \$2.6 million toward gun violence research in 1995. More recent appropriations have expanded the language of the original Dickey Amendment to apply to the entire Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).²

Former Representative Jay Dickey, the sponsor of the amendment, wrote in 2012 that:³

Scientists don’t view traffic injuries as “senseless” or “accidental” but as events susceptible to understanding and prevention. Urban planners, elected officials and highway engineers approach such injuries by asking four questions: What is the problem? What are the causes? Have effective interventions been discovered? Can we install these interventions in our community? The federal government has invested billions to understand the causes of motor vehicle fatalities and, with that knowledge, has markedly reduced traffic deaths in the United States. Since the mid-1970s, research has inspired such interventions as child restraints, seat belts, frontal airbags, a minimum drinking age and motorcycle helmets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 366,000 lives were saved through such efforts from 1975 to 2009. ... The same evidence-based approach that is saving millions of lives from motor-vehicle crashes, as well as from smoking, cancer and HIV/AIDS, can help reduce the toll of deaths and injuries from gun violence.

We support directing government funds to conduct research in this area. Gun violence is an issue of national concern, and it would be beneficial to the dialogue on gun violence prevention to enable our public health agencies to collect and analyze nationwide data. **We urge Congress to act promptly and pass the Gun Violence Research Act.**

Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council. March, 2018

¹ Public Law 104–208 (September 30, 1996)

² Public Law 114-113 (December 18, 2015)

³ Jay Dickey and Mark Rosenberg, “We won’t know the cause of gun violence until we look for it,” *Washington Post* (July 27, 2012)