

AN OPEN LETTER ON GUNS — FROM NH PEDIATRICIANS TO OUR LEGISLATORS

As professionals who care for children, we spend our time supporting their health and well-being. We are collectively appalled by gun violence in our country. We believe that legislators have failed to protect children from gun violence, as evidenced most recently by the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We expect our legislators to support common sense firearms regulations proposed by President Obama and stricter state regulations as well. The regulations should:

1. Limit sales of high-capacity rapid-fire weapons.
 - Reinstate and strengthen the ban on assault weapons.
 - Limit ammunition magazines to ten rounds.
 - Apply these bans to old weapons--buy them back.
2. Enhance oversight of gun sales.
 - Require background checks on ALL gun sales, including gun shows and private sales.
 - Increase penalties for "straw purchasers," people who buy weapons for someone else.
 - Include a waiting period to prevent tragedies that arise when emotions are high.
 - Aggressively pursue trafficking--unethical gun dealers should be put out of business.
3. Limit weapon carrying in public places.
 - Prohibit anyone other than a law enforcement or security officer from bearing arms in federal and state, buildings, airports, hospitals and public schools.
4. Earmark funds for mental health services and research on gun and media violence.
 - Expand mental health programs for young people
 - Fund violence data collection and research at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
 - Hold congressional hearings on product placement of assault weapons in video games.

The frequency of gun deaths and injuries in our country is unacceptable. We will not allow our children, who represent our future, to suffer as we remain silent. According to recent polls, a majority of N.H. residents support common sense limits to gun ownership and access, and we urge our representatives enact them now. In the words of Pablo Casals, "We must all work to make the world worthy of its children."

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