

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 22, 2022

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Center for Disease Control and Prevention  
395 E St SW  
Washington, DC 20024

**Subject: Gun control activist influence over CDC Research**

Dear Director Walensky,

We write with growing concern and disappointment at the revelation the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) succumbed to pressure from gun control organizations to delete references to a commissioned study from the CDC's website that detailed defensive gun use (DGU) estimates.

As reported in an article recently published in *The Reload*, the CDC opted to delete a reference to a study regarding DGUs after an extensive lobbying effort from gun control organizations including Gun Violence Archive, Newtown Action Alliance, and GVPedia. The study estimated DGUs as frequently as 2.5 million times per year in the United States.<sup>1</sup> These groups argued the estimates have created a roadblock to enacting further restrictions on the Second Amendment.

The CDC prides itself on being a "science-based, data driven service that protects the public's health." However, censorship action taken by the CDC has the exact opposite effect of that goal. Eliminating a credible study and its findings hurts public health, and the credibility of the CDC, by not allowing transparent access to all relevant research. The removal of the referenced study was not due to updated research. Instead, based on the released emails from the FOIA request, the removal of this study appears only to have been done to appease gun control groups and to suppress any data that firearms are in fact an essential lifesaving and protection tool.

According to the released emails, Mark Bryant of Gun Violence Archive lobbied against the study references on the CDC website. He stated "[T]hat 2.5 Million number needs to be

---

<sup>1</sup> Kleck, Gary and Marc Gertz. 1995. "Armed Resistance to Crime: the Prevalence and Nature of Self-defense with a Gun." *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology* 86(1):150-187.

killed, buried, dug up, killed again and buried again.”<sup>2</sup> Essentially, the gun statistics did not play well into the narrative of banning constitutionally protected firearms used by millions of Americans for self-defense. Then in December of 2021, Beth Reimels, CDC Associate Director for Policy, Partnerships and Communication stated in a separate email to Devin Hughes of GVPedia “We will also make some edits to the content we discussed that I think will address the concerns you and other partners have raised.”<sup>3</sup> The CDC did exactly what the gun control organizations requested, rejecting the science, and the referenced study was removed as requested.

Lobbying groups should not be able to influence your research and reporting. This is a dereliction of duty by the CDC. The CDC must return to providing transparent and data-driven reporting on DGUs, and to provide Congress and the American people with an explanation of why the CDC allowed gun control advocates to censor valid research and reporting conducted on the subject of defensive gun use.

Please provide the following information and documentation as soon as possible, but in any event no later than 5:00PM on Friday, December 30:

1. The recording of the reported virtual meeting that took place with representatives from the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), GVPedia, and Newtown Action Alliance on September 15, 2021. If the meeting was not recorded or has since been deleted, a transcript or detailed summary of the meeting.
2. Were any other executive branch employees who are not employed by the CDC involved in organizing this meeting with gun control activists?
3. Which CDC employees approved the removal of defensive gun statistics from the CDC website? Was the White House consulted?
4. What procedures does the CDC employ when changing what statistics they make publicly available?
5. Did the CDC engage with any pro-Second Amendment organizations before they authorized the removal of these statistics?

Sincerely,



---

Chuck Grassley  
United States Senator



---

Tom Cotton  
United States Senator

---

<sup>2</sup> Email from Mark Bryant to Elizabeth Reimels (September 16, 2021).

<https://thereload.com/app/uploads/2022/12/CDC-DGU-Mark-Bryant-on-killing-Kleck-estimate.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Email from Elizabeth Reimels to Devin Hughes (December 10, 2021).

<https://thereload.com/app/uploads/2022/12/CDC-DGU-Beth-Reimels-thanks-gun-control-advocates.pdf>

*Marsha Blackburn*

---

Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator

*Joni K. Ernst*

---

Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

*Bill Cassidy, M.D.*

---

Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

CC: Debra Houry, MD, MPH, Acting Principal Deputy Director, Designated Federal Officer for the Advisory Committee to the Director