

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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September 8, 2024

The Honorable James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Comer:

On Wednesday, America experienced another massacre by an AR-15 in a public school.¹ With two more students and two more teachers dead and nine wounded in Winder, Georgia, with their families and communities grieving and ripped apart by this violence, we wonder whether you agree it is now time to call a hearing to address why our nation sees rates of gun violence hundreds of times higher than the United Kingdom and why gun violence is now the leading cause of death for American children and teens.²

Do you agree that it is time for Congress to act to stop these atrocities, or do you think it is time for us to continue to do nothing at all?

Not doing anything in response to another firearm attack at a school would send the message that we think this kind of savage gun violence in schools is normal and acceptable.

We know we don't have a lot of time left in this Congress, but it is hard to think of a more pressing public policy problem than gun violence.

Would you, as Chairman of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability, convene a hearing to examine the causes of—and best solutions to address—the gun violence epidemic plaguing our country?

¹ *A 14-Year-Old Student Fatally Shot 4 People in a Rampage at a Georgia High School, Officials Say*, Associated Press (Sept. 4, 2024) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/georgia-high-school-lockdown-3969d34cf6a7adc787facf21c469ef4d>).

² *How the U.S. Gun Violence Death Rate Compares with the Rest of the World*, NPR (Oct. 31, 2023) (online at www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/10/31/1209683893/how-the-u-s-gun-violence-death-rate-compares-with-the-rest-of-the-world); *As Guns Rise to Leading Cause of Death Among US Children, Research Funding to Help Prevent and Protect Victims Lags*, CNN (Feb. 7, 2024) (online at www.cnn.com/2024/02/07/health/gun-deaths-injury-research-funding/index.html).

Details are still emerging about the events of this most recent mass shooting in Georgia. It is clear, however, that the 14-year-old shooter—who is not even old enough to legally drive a car—obtained from his father an “AR-15-style” firearm to kill his classmates and teachers.³ As you know, AR-style rifles are now the preferred weapon of mass shooters.⁴

The Committee has only held one hearing this Congress about a mass shooting and that hearing was entirely focused on the operational failures of the United States Secret Service.⁵ On July 22, 2024, you convened a hearing to examine the attempted assassination of Donald Trump that took the life of one person and left two others critically injured.⁶ We joined you in calling not only for that hearing but for the resignation of the Secret Service Director for her outrageous failure to answer the most basic questions about the Secret Service operational failures on that day.⁷ We also said that we were right to seek dramatic improvements in the protective posture of the Secret Service in keeping presidential candidates safe from gun violence.⁸

But we also asked what we are planning to do to keep the rest of the population safe from mass gun violence.⁹

It is a serious dereliction of duty for this Committee—and the Republican-led House Representatives—to act to protect presidential candidates from gun violence but do nothing at all to protect the rest of the American people whom the president serves. When a former president is nearly assassinated in an AR-15 mass shooting, we don’t simply call it a “fact of life,” offer casual “thoughts and prayers,” and then move on.¹⁰ When a president is targeted by a mass shooter wielding an AR-15, we call hearings, analyze the problem, and act to reduce the risks of another attack.

³ *Where the Suspected Georgia School Shooter Got the Gun, and More Questions Answered*, CBS (Sept. 6, 2024) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/georgia-school-shooting-gun/).

⁴ See *Terror on Repeat: A Rare Look at the Devastation Caused by AR-15 Shootings*, Washington Post (Nov. 16, 2023) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/nation/interactive/2023/ar-15-force-mass-shootings/).

⁵ Committee on Oversight and Accountability, *Hearing on Oversight of the U.S. Secret Service and the Attempted Assassination of President Donald J. Trump* (July 22, 2024) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/oversight-of-the-u-s-secret-service-and-the-attempted-assassination-of-president-donald-j-trump/>).

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*


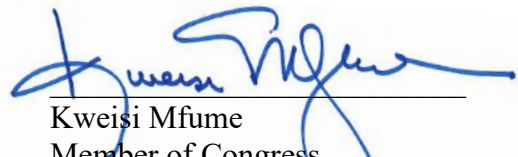

⁹ *Id.* On March 23, 2023, the Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs convened a joint hearing to advocate against the “Assault on the Second Amendment” and champion greater access to modifications that easily convert firearms into fully automatic weapons. See Committee on Oversight and Accountability, *Joint Hearing on ATF’s Assault on the Second Amendment: When is Enough Enough?* (Mar. 23, 2024) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/%EF%BF%BCatfs-assault-on-the-second-amendment-when-is-enough-enough/>).

¹⁰ *JD Vance Calls Reality of School Shootings a Bleak ‘Fact of Life,’* Washington Post (Sept. 6, 2024) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/09/06/jd-vance-school-shootings/).

Since the beginning of the 118th Congress on January 3, 2023, there have been more than 1,000 mass shootings in America.¹¹ And, just since the hearing in July, the United States has seen more than 70 additional mass shootings.¹² In June, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared that the soaring number of children killed by firearms has created an “urgent public health crisis.”¹³

This Committee should show the American people that Congress can and will act to stop the devastation caused by AR-15s and other firearms every single day. We therefore urge you to convene a hearing this month about our gun violence epidemic and to discuss popular commonsense legislation, like a universal violent criminal background check and a ban on military-style assault weapons, to protect the lives of children at school, teachers, and the rest of the American people.


Very truly yours,


Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress
Stephen Lynch
Member of Congress
Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress
Katie Porter
Member of Congress

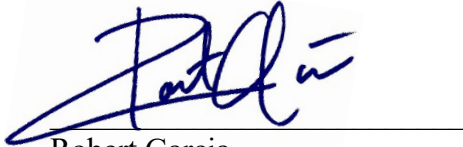
¹¹ Gun Violence Archive (online at www.gunviolencearchive.org/query/4e5c875e-ed44-4dd0-a1fe-d4ce1f3c8231) (accessed Sept. 5, 2024).

¹² *Id.*

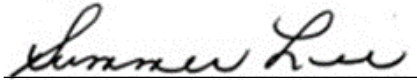
¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, *Firearm Violence: A Public Health Crisis in America* (June 25, 2024) (online at www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/firearm-violence-advisory.pdf); *Gun Violence an ‘Urgent’ Public Health Crisis; Surgeon General Wants Warnings on Firearms*, USA Today (June 25, 2024) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/06/25/gun-violence-public-health-crisis-surgeon-general/74168023007/).



Shontel Brown
Member of Congress



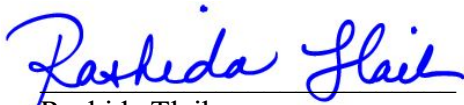
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



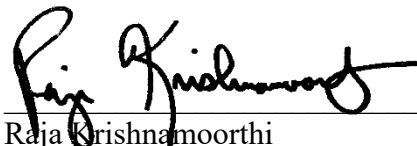
Summer Lee
Member of Congress



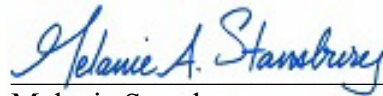
Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



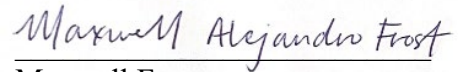
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



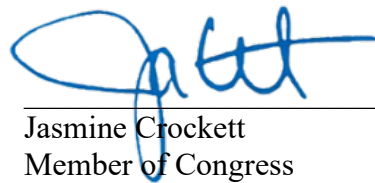
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



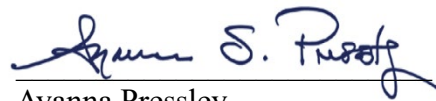
Maxwell Frost
Member of Congress



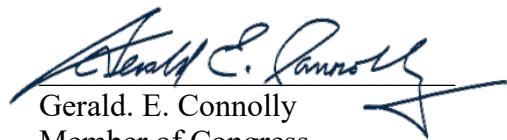
Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress