

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Departments of  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Departments of  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray,

As you begin work on the fiscal year 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request \$23.5 million for the National Violent Death Reporting System within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention budget.

The National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) is a state-based system that centralizes information from a variety of state and local agencies and sources such as law enforcement, medical examiners, crime labs, and death certificates to provide a more comprehensive picture of the circumstances surrounding violent deaths. The system tracks deaths caused by child abuse, domestic abuse, suicide, and homicide, which enables states to develop effective strategies to address the root causes of these deaths and implement strategies for prevention. Furthermore, the NVDRS allows the public-health research community to access a rich data set that can be analyzed to study the circumstances that lead to violent deaths in our communities.

Each year more than 55,000 Americans die violently.<sup>[1]</sup> Despite this staggering loss of life, we lack comprehensive data about the circumstances surrounding these deaths. An issue of particular concern is the alarmingly high suicide rate among active and former military personnel — estimated to be 20 percent of all suicides nationally.<sup>[2]</sup> But due to the lack of comprehensive national data, this estimate is based solely on information obtained from states currently funded to participate in the NVDRS.

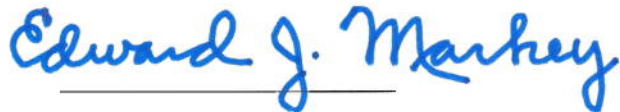
In fact, the current NVDRS budget provides enough resources for only 32 states to track data on violent deaths;<sup>[3]</sup> another 8 states have successfully applied for grants but received no money due to insufficient funding. With a \$7.5 million dollar increase in last year's NVDRS budget, we can expand this critical program to the remaining 18 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>[4]</sup> Data collected through NVDRS has led to effective programs in participating states all across the country, which have reduced suicide rates

and other instances of violent deaths.<sup>[5]</sup> Given these positive results, additional funding is warranted and would allow all states to design and implement targeted violent-death prevention programs.

We believe that the NVDRS is a cost-effective and integral component to the long-term success of local efforts to better understand and ultimately reduce violent deaths in our communities.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey



Richard Blumenthal



Richard J. Durbin



Christopher Murphy

cc: The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member,  
Senate Committee on Appropriations