

May 25, 2022

President Pro Tempore, Senator Jake Corman
350 Main Capitol Building

Senate Majority Leader, Senator Kim Ward
292 Main Capitol Building

Speaker of the House, Representative Bryan Cutler
139 Main Capitol Building

House Majority Leader, Representative Kerry Benninghoff
110 Main Capitol Building

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, yet another tragic and senseless mass shooting occurred in Ulvalde, Texas, taking the lives of at least 21 innocent people, including 19 elementary school children. The violence at Robb Elementary School is the 215th reported mass shooting in America in 2022 and it is not even the end of May. Just 10 days prior, a racist and hate-based attack killed 10 Black individuals in Buffalo. We demand that the Senate and House take action to stem gun violence, prevent hate crimes, and provide necessary mental and behavioral health resources. It is callous and cynical to stand by and hope it simply goes away or, even worse, tolerate and become numb to ongoing gun violence. In light of these recent and numerous heartbreaking events, continuing to do nothing is simply not an option.

The Senate Democrats have introduced many bills that would, at a minimum, help to mitigate the impact of gun violence in Pennsylvania. With the number of guns that we have permitted to accumulate in our country (over 400 million to date) we must take action to keep them out of the hands of bad actors. But we must also prevent more high-powered firearms from being easily accessed and sold to the public.

We call on you to act on the following pieces of reasonable and responsible legislation and appropriations. These measures do not infringe on Second Amendment rights, nor on the ownership of firearms by responsible individuals:

- **Senate Bill 88** – This legislation eliminates most of the exceptions to the requirement of a background check prior to the purchase or transfer of a firearm. The close familial transfer exception to the background check requirements would remain under this legislation.
- **Senate Bill 134** – This bill provides for extreme risk protection orders to keep firearms out of the hands of individuals with documented evidence of potential to harm themselves or others. The bill would temporarily suspend a person’s access to firearms through a court process. We have similar processes in place for protection from abuse orders and for involuntary commitment. It is common sense that we provide the same protections for the public from firearms.
- **Senate Bill 217** – This bill provides for required reporting of lost and stolen weapons to local law enforcement with 24 hours of recognition of the event. Illegal firearms proliferation, and violent crime associated with it, continues to plague our state and country and requiring reporting of stolen weapons will help us fight back.
- **Senate Bills 710 through 713** – This package provides for several opportunities to reduce and punish violent crime; including providing for a centralized database for tracking and reporting on hate groups, concurrent jurisdiction to the Attorney General for prosecuting offenses, better training for police for recognizing hate crimes, and diversity education for individuals who have committed hate crimes.

There are myriad bills from both parties to improve mental and behavioral health access and treatment in the Commonwealth, but we need to immediately allocate ARPA funds to attract and retain staff in our schools, in our communities, and for all residents. Mental and behavioral health problems have been festering for years and have been exacerbated during the pandemic. We must provide more resources to bolster our mental and behavioral health providers.

We must continue investing in community gun violence prevention programs and working to secure vulnerable buildings and locations. While we have made strides in the last few sessions, there is so much more that can be done to improve the conditions in our neighborhoods, community buildings, churches and temples, and other high-profile locations.

Our caucus has many more measures that would go a long way toward preventing and fighting violent firearm events. These are all common sense and widely supported legislative actions that we can take immediately. With Republican majority leadership in both chambers of the General Assembly, only your actions can direct our path forward.

We call upon Republican leadership to prioritize these bills and appropriations during our June session weeks so that we can start to take substantive action to turn the tide of these horrific tragedies.

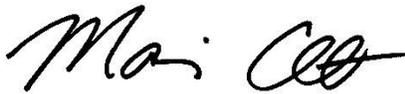
Sincerely,



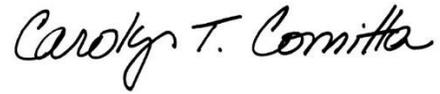
Senator Jay Costa, Democratic Leader
43rd Senate District



Senator Amanda Cappelletti
17th Senate District



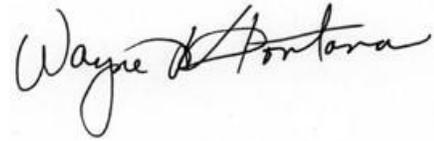
Senator Maria Collett
12th Senate District



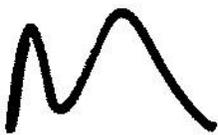
Senator Carolyn Comitta
19th Senate District



Senator Marty Flynn
22nd Senate District



Senator Wayne Fontana
42nd Senate District



Senator Art Haywood
4th Senate District



Senator Vincent Hughes
7th Senate District



Senator John Kane
9th Senate District



Senator Tim Kearney
26th Senate District



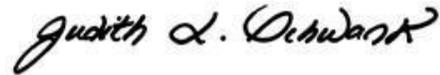
Senator Katie Muth
44th Senate District



Senator Steve Santarsiero
10th Senate District



Senator Nikil Saval
1st Senate District



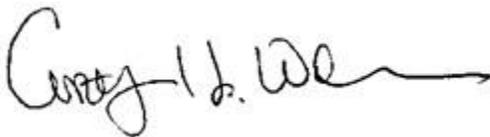
Senator Judith Schwank
11th Senate District



Senator Sharif Street
3rd Senate District



Senator Christine Tartaglione
2nd Senate District



Senator Anthony H. Williams
8th Senate District



Senator Lindsey Williams
38th Senate District