



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3605

December 19, 2022

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

Director Walensky:

We write to express our concern regarding the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) decision to remove a CDC-commissioned study regarding defensive gun use (DGU) on the CDC's website. According to recent reporting, this decision comes as the result of a private meeting held between your agency and a left-leaning advocacy group, much of which has been inconsistently redacted from the public.<sup>1</sup>

The gun control debate is not about hobbies or sports. It is about protecting one of the most fundamental rights afforded to the American people. There is a difference between providing information to educate consumers, and censoring facts that third-party groups may disagree with politically. Confidence in CDC information is at an all-time low, and just this week a survey from Kaiser Family Foundation shows that the Biden Administration's COVID-19 mandates and policies have increased skepticism of routine childhood vaccination. Removing studies without explanation in an apparent effort to curry favor with political allies of the Biden administration will only further deteriorate public trust. **We respectfully request you overturn this decision immediately and make available all data regarding DGU.**

As you are aware, the 'Dickey Amendment' was adopted in Fiscal Year (FY) 1997<sup>2</sup>, stating that "... *that none of the funds made available for injury prevention and control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may be used to advocate or promote gun control.*" Later, in FY 2011, this limitation was extended from the Centers to all the U.S. Department of Health and

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<sup>1</sup> Gutowski, S. (2022, December 15). *Emails show CDC removed defensive gun use stats after gun-control advocates pressured officials in private meeting.* The Reload. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from <https://thereload.com/emails-cdc-removed-defensive-gun-use-stats-after-gun-control-advocates-pressured-officials-in-private-meeting/>

<sup>2</sup> Krouse, W. J. (2017, August 7). *Gun Control: FY2017 Appropriations for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and Other Initiatives.* Congressional Research Service. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/details?prodcode=R44686>

Human Services. Then, in FY 2012, Congress modified the limitations to prohibit any department or agency funded under the appropriations bill from conducting “publicity or propaganda... designed to support or defeat the enactment of legislation” which stands as the current provision.

Despite the current law prohibiting such influence, one of the meeting attendees, Mark Bryant, argued that the CDC’s study has been damaging to the prospects of passing new gun-control measures, and ought to be eliminated from the CDC’s website.<sup>3</sup> In the same email thread following the meeting, Bryant described that since the CDC published their study, “gun violence prevention policy has ground to a halt.”

Opinions of the nation’s institutions continue to be low due to overt politicization — the CDC censoring public health facts at the behest of gun control advocates will only add to the mistrust. The removal of a study – commissioned by the CDC – indicates that the CDC is avoiding the responsibility bestowed to them by Congress. This censorship panders to the activist groups who aim to cover-up the fact that much of the firearm industry prevails because consumers seek the ability to protect their life, liberty, and property.

If agencies created with informing the American public are so easily swayed by political-interest groups, they will lose all credibility with the American people.

The politicization of our institutions must end. With this said, we request that your office reply to the following:

1. Why did the CDC remove *Priorities for Research to Reduce the Threat of Firearm-Related Violence* from its website?
2. What is the CDC’s plan to provide data on defensive gun use to consumers via their website?
3. What other groups or organizations did CDC consult, if any, prior to removing the study from its website?" If not, why not?
4. Please describe in detail the CDC’s process of removing studies from their public information pages and provide a list of all studies removed from CDC’s website over the last 6 months.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



August Pfluger  
Member of Congress



Elise Stefanik  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> Gutowski, S. (2022, December 15). *Emails show CDC removed defensive gun use stats after gun-control advocates pressured officials in private meeting*. The Reload. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from <https://thereload.com/emails-cdc-removed-defensive-gun-use-stats-after-gun-control-advocates-pressured-officials-in-private-meeting/>