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Senate of Pennsylvania

August 13, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Baker
Chairwoman of the Senate Judiciary Committee
362 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Baker:

Thank you for your August 6 statement following the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio. We mourn the loss of life from this past weekend and at the same time we cannot deny the increasing frequency of these incidents across the nation. As we saw most notably with the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh nearly a year ago, but also with many incidents in Philadelphia and Allentown and even here in Bucks County, Pennsylvania is not immune from the horrors and threats of gun violence.

Your acknowledgement that we must take action to reform our gun laws indicates that we may be at a tipping point in the General Assembly. With your leadership on these issues and our collective efforts in the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am hopeful that we can confront these acts of violence with real change that will keep guns out of the hands of individuals intent on violence while also meeting the challenge head on to address what you define as “the climate of hate and bias that encourages supremacists and others to act in violent and destructive ways.”

When I was sworn into the Pennsylvania Senate this year, I made it a point that the first pieces of legislation I would introduce would focus on common sense gun safety measures supported by the majority of citizens and gun owners. Specifically, my bills would go a long way to keeping guns out of the hands of people who may harm themselves or others.

Senate Bill 88 would require universal background checks. Under current law, unlicensed sellers can transfer long barrel firearms, such as semi-automatic rifles, without having to run any background check whatsoever. This bill would ensure that individuals attempting to obtain a firearm are authorized to possess such weapons.

Senate Bills 137 and 138 would provide for the safe storage of firearms. Many law-abiding gun owners live in homes with people who are not legally allowed to possess firearms – either because of their age, criminal history, or other prohibiting factors. Safe gun storage refers to practices that limit accessibility to guns by unauthorized users, including minors and individuals with a criminal history. These practices can include locking guns in a secure place such as a gun safe or cabinet or using safety

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devices such as trigger or cable locks. Safe storage laws in other states have proven to educate and motivate good practices and prevent suicides and homicides and make our communities safer.

We must take action to address the gun violence crisis, passing laws to protect our constituents and save lives. That is why I respectfully request that you consider my bills during the upcoming hearings. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven J. Santarsiero", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Steven J. Santarsiero
10th Senate District