

Letters to the UMB Community

UMB Center to Prevent Gun Violence

Aug. 9, 2019

To the UMB Community:

Gilroy, California; El Paso, Texas; Dayton, Ohio: In the space of a week, 34 lives were taken, the victims—*a/ways*more victims—of gun violence. Meanwhile in Baltimore, July was the deadliest month in more than two years, with 38 people killed in this city, more deaths than days on the calendar.

I hate writing these letters. I hate reading the stories of the victims and what they wanted most out of life—had their lives not been so brutally, so senselessly, cut short. I hate reading about the little children and grieving parents they left behind. And I hate the despair I feel—the anger and anguish and cynicism—as our nation’s death toll climbs unimpeded.

But we are so very fortunate that at UMB, despair isn’t our only option. We have the option to act. And we will. I’ve asked Donald Tobin, JD, dean of the Francis King Carey School of Law, to take the lead in creating the UMB Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Our combination of schools means we are uniquely positioned not only to design and promote laws that inhibit gun violence, but to treat the trauma that so often leads to this violence and the trauma that persists so acutely in its wake. We’ll examine the gun-related projects we’re currently undertaking, and explore the ways we can leverage our cross-disciplinary expertise to save lives.

Our ability to make a difference here lies in our long experience and deep scholarship. But it lies, too, in our people, whose lives of love, service, and compassion compel us to lead. As educators, health professionals, social workers, and lawyers, we believe that gun violence is among the gravest public health threats this country faces today. And we are determined that the pain we feel personally after each of these tragedies will—again and again, as long as it takes—motivate us to make the change we need. That will be the good that comes from so much sorrow.

In the coming months, you’ll have the chance to share your thoughts about how we can work most effectively across schools to end this epidemic of gun deaths. Together, we can gather our outrage and our grief, we can harness our extraordinary power to attack this crisis as we have others that have ravaged our nation. We can stand together and say: *Not one more.*

Sincerely,

Jay A. Perman, MD
President