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By:  Blanco S.C.R. No. 8

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Gun violence in America is the leading cause of death among children and teens and the 13th leading cause of death among all ages; and

WHEREAS, Each year, more than 39,000 people in the United States die as a result of gun violence, or about 109 every day, according to the Centers for Disease Control National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; tens of thousands more suffer gun injuries that are nonfatal but too often prove life-changing; and

WHEREAS, In Texas, someone is killed with a gun every three hours, and guns are the state's third-leading cause of death for children aged 1 to 17; guns make domestic violence incidents far more likely to end in fatalities, and more than 60 percent of intimate partner homicides involve a firearm; and

WHEREAS, Guns are a significant danger to Texans suffering from suicidal ideation; 60 percent of all suicides involve firearms, and the percentage is even higher for veterans who commit suicide; tragically, attempts of suicide by firearm in this country result in death 85 percent of the time, compared to just three percent for other methods, such as drug overdose; the vast majority of people who survive an attempted suicide do not try again; and

WHEREAS, Capable of inflicting serious or deadly injuries on many people in a short time, firearms have vast potential to amplify violence; the nation saw 418 mass shootings in 2019 alone, resulting in the deaths of more than 460 people and injury to over 1,700; Texas has witnessed numerous such incidents in recent years, including the 2017 Sutherland Springs church shooting, which claimed 26 lives and left 20 people wounded; the next year, a 17-year-old student killed 10 and injured 10 at Santa Fe High School; 2019 brought even more devastation; in early August, a gunman murdered 23 and wounded a further 23 at an El Paso Walmart, and before the month was out, another shooter went on a rampage in Midland-Odessa, murdering seven and injuring 25; and

WHEREAS, People who survive a firearm-related injury may experience severe long-term consequences, ranging from paralysis and other physical disabilities to problems with memory, thinking, and emotions, as well as chronic mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder; the effects of firearm violence extend beyond victims and their families, and mass shooting incidents can affect the sense of safety and security of entire communities and impact everyday decisions; the National Center for PTSD estimates that 28 percent of people who have witnessed a mass shooting develop the illness, while about a third develop acute stress disorder; incidents of mass violence have an enormous behavioral health impact on most people, whether they are survivors, witnesses, or exposed through mass media; moreover, active shooter drills in schools, implemented widely in response to mass shootings, are associated with increases in depression, stress, anxiety, and physiological problems among students, their teachers, and their parents; and

WHEREAS, The economic impact of firearm violence is substantial as well; in 2015 alone, it cost the U.S. $229 billion; gun violence imposes myriad burdens on society, including work loss, medical and mental health care, emergency transportation, police and criminal justice activities, insurance claims processing, employer costs, and decreased quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Gun violence is not inevitable, as shown by other wealthy nations with gun homicide rates vastly lower than ours; the United States has a deeply rooted culture of gun violence that has not received the same sustained, data-driven attention and government investment as other public health problems, including motor vehicle accidents and HIV/AIDS; in addressing those threats, scientific research informed a comprehensive public health response that dramatically shifted their trajectory; and

WHEREAS, The size, complexity, and grave social and economic consequences of the gun violence epidemic demand a similarly comprehensive, science-based approach; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby declare gun violence a public health crisis.