88R4656 TBO-D

By:  Blanco S.C.R. No. 1

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Gun violence has reached record levels across the United States; and

WHEREAS, Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that incidents involving a firearm are the leading cause of death for Americans from 1 to 18 years of age; 3,219 such deaths occurred in 2020; and

WHEREAS, Nearly 49,000 Americans lost their lives to gun violence in 2021, according to an analysis by the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions; between 2019 and 2021, homicides involving guns increased by 45 percent, compared to just 6 percent for other murders; the alarming spike parallels a surge in gun purchases during the pandemic, including an increase in sales to first-time owners; moreover, tens of thousands of individuals suffered nonfatal but life-changing gun injuries; and

WHEREAS, In Texas, someone is killed with a gun every two hours, and the state's rate of nonfatal gun injuries is 27 percent higher than the national rate; 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, Firearms have vast potential to amplify violence, and Texas has experienced some of the nation's worst mass shootings in recent years; the 2017 Sutherland Springs church shooting claimed 26 lives and left 20 people wounded; the next year, a 17-year-old student killed 10 and injured 13 at Santa Fe High School; 2019 brought even more devastation, when a single month saw both the massacre at an El Paso Walmart that left 23 dead and 25 wounded and the shooting spree in Midland-Odessa that resulted in 7 dead and 25 injured; in 2022, an 18-year-old gunman shot his grandmother before attacking Robb Elementary School, where 21 perished and 17 suffered injury; and

WHEREAS, Survivors of gun violence 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; even in the absence of physical injury, exposure to such violence can have enduring negative effects on child health and development, and the effects of firearm violence extend beyond victims and their families; 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 condition, 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, From 2019 to 2021, rates of gun-related suicide rose by 10 percent, even as suicides by other means decreased by about 8 percent; over 26,300 Americans died in suicides involving firearms in 2021, a record high; research has shown that access to a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide death by 300 percent; as the most lethal method of suicide, firearms account for just 5 percent of attempts, but more than half of all suicide deaths; the vast majority of people who survive an attempted suicide do not try again, but only about 10 percent of those who attempt suicide by firearm live to get the help they need; and

WHEREAS, Contrary to some media narratives, a study from The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston concludes that there is insufficient evidence to infer that gun violence is caused by mental health issues; furthermore, research shows that adults with mental illnesses experience violence at high rates, and they are more likely to be victims, not perpetrators, of community violence; and

WHEREAS, While the human toll of gun violence is the most wrenching, the economic consequences are immense as well, reaching $557 billion in an average year, comparable to 2.6 percent of U.S. gross domestic product; 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 88th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby declare gun violence a public health crisis.