

## News from the Massachusetts Medical Society

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### **Massachusetts Medical Society states support of Attorney General's assault weapons ban**

Waltham – August 9 – Citing his organization's "long history of violence prevention initiatives and policies," the president of the Massachusetts Medical Society today announced his firm support of Attorney General Maura Healey's intention to increase enforcement of the assault weapons ban in the Commonwealth.

James S. Gessner, M.D., in separate letters to the state's highest elected officials, said that the Society "applauds Attorney General Healey for her notification to the Commonwealth's gun manufacturers and sellers of an increase in enforcement of the assault weapons ban to now include sales of copycat weapons. This action will further reduce the number of dangerous firearms in Massachusetts."

Writing to Governor Charlie Baker, Senate President Stanley Rosenberg, and Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo late last month, Dr. Gessner added that "There have been far too many tragedies involving multiple shootings in communities across the United States. The Massachusetts Medical Society stands ready to join with you and other organizations working to reduce gun violence."

In June, following the mass shooting in Orlando, Dr. Gessner restated the physician's perspective on gun violence in an [essay on the Society's website](#), emphasizing the medical profession's position that gun violence is a public health issue.

"Our stance on this issue has been firm and long-standing," Dr. Gessner wrote. "Our medical society's policy on firearms and gun violence is expansive and dates back to 1995. It is guided by the principles of reducing the number of deaths, disabilities, and injuries attributable to guns; making gun ownership safer; promoting education relative to guns, ammunition, and violence prevention for physicians and other health professionals as well as for the public; and encouraging research to understand the risk factors related to gun violence and deaths."

"The physician's voice," he added, "is critical on matters of public health and must become stronger."

He noted in the essay that more than [two dozen organizations](#), representing physicians, attorneys, and other health professionals, issued a call to action in 2015 to advocate for "measures to reduce the health and public health consequences of firearms."

The Society had previously called attention to the crisis of gun violence in America with its [April public health forum](#), *Firearm Violence: Policy, Prevention, and Public Health*. Based on the sessions from the forum, the medical society has created [continuing medical education](#)

[courses on gun violence](#) for physicians and other health care providers. Seven individual courses are currently available from the Society.

*The Massachusetts Medical Society, with more than 25,000 physicians and student members, is dedicated to educating and advocating for the patients and physicians of Massachusetts. The Society, under the auspices of NEJM Group, publishes the New England Journal of Medicine, a leading global medical journal and web site, and Journal Watch alerts and newsletters covering 13 specialties. The Society is also a leader in continuing medical education providing accredited and certified activities across the globe for physicians and other health care professionals. Founded in 1781, MMS is the oldest continuously operating medical society in the country. For more information please visit [www.massmed.org](http://www.massmed.org), [www.nejm.org](http://www.nejm.org), or [www.jwatch.org](http://www.jwatch.org).*