



Dear Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan,

Thank you for your leadership in this unprecedented pandemic. In a time of fear, your Stay at Home orders are grounded in facts. Your data-based Minnesota Model strategies help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our state. And your communications strategies have inspired trust and confidence across Minnesotans from all walks of life. We trust you will continue setting a national standard by looking at research and proactively mitigating other risk factors that endanger Minnesotans in this worrisome time.

As a result of the pandemic, Minnesotans are facing prodigious levels of stress from risk of disease and threat of financial catastrophe. Concomitant with these stressors, they are purchasing guns at an astonishing rate. More guns in more households will mean more suicides, more homicides, and more unintentional shootings. Already, crisis lines are seeing dramatic increases in domestic violence and suicide-related calls and texts.

Therefore, we ask you to take the following actions:

**1. Promote safe gun storage**

We ask that you promote safe storage, both by speaking directly to Minnesotans through video messages as well as on your website. Safe gun storage saves lives.

**2. Support people who are at risk of domestic and intimate partner violence**

Work with domestic violence shelters and programs, such as Women's Advocates in Saint Paul, Safe Haven and the [Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs](#) in Duluth, and the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#), to make the public aware of [resources about protecting people from abuse](#), including the [MyPlan app](#). We urge Minnesota to restrict gun access among individuals who are subject to domestic violence restraining orders. States that do restrict gun access in cases of domestic violence restraining orders have seen a 13% reduction in firearm intimate partner homicides.

**3. Promote suicide prevention**

As MDH Commissioner Jan Malcolm's [Statement on 2017 Suicides](#) notes, suicide is preventable, and the data show we need to do more to prevent suicide. Over the past several years, our state has seen growing numbers of suicides. Now, suicides account for nearly 80 percent of all Minnesota's gun deaths. In 2017, almost 800 Minnesotans died by suicide.

We believe that the first step toward reducing our statewide suicide problem is to educate Minnesotans. Next steps include encouraging safe gun storage and passing essential bills, such as Background Checks and Red Flag Protection Orders.

For now, while much of the state is at home, enduring one of the most stressful periods in decades, we ask that you both speak openly to Minnesotans about how we all can reduce suicide in our state. By addressing this serious issue proactively, you can help Minnesotans understand we all have a role in reducing suicide among our families, friends and communities.

#### **4. Promote safe ways to cope with stress**

On your [Stay Home MN website](#), please include links to resources that help us feel safe at home without guns. In addition to reminding Minnesotans we can still go outside in our neighborhoods and parks to walk, bike, and run, we hope you will encourage Minnesotans to consider more ways to manage our stress levels, such as:

- Encouraging Minnesotans to phone a friend
- Scheduling Zoom or Facebook Live chats or virtual dinner with friends
- Try meditation, yoga, or relaxation classes
- Remind Minnesotans that public libraries offer ebooks, even when libraries are closed
- Share resources for families about talking to children about COVID-19, including those from [NAMI-MN](#), [MN Communities Caring for Children](#) and the [American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry](#).
- Share resources for [families to relax and have fun](#)

Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan, we are so grateful for the leadership you, along with the First Lady, have shown about gun violence prevention. We have cheered the Governor's promise to sign Background Checks and Red Flag Protection Orders into law as soon as they reach your desk. Governor, we've heard you and the First Lady talk about how your son is the same age as the students from Sandy Hook. We know you understand the risks of gun violence. Now, in this time of crisis, it's critical that you speak clearly to Minnesotans about the risks of gun violence.

We ask you both to urge Minnesotans to store their guns safely; support women, trans and gender nonconforming people, and children who are at risk of domestic and intimate partner violence; take action to reduce the risk of suicide; and promote healthy, violence-free ways to manage stress so more Minnesotans can feel safe at home.

We know you will continue your efforts to make sure that all of us can be One Minnesota, Safe at Home. Thank you for your work to see and uplift families and communities who are at great risk of experiencing gun violence during this public health crisis. We are grateful for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Sara Beth Mueller  
Interim Executive Director  
Protect Minnesota

Joan Peterson  
Co-President and Regional Chair

Protect Minnesota Northland

Sue Abderholden  
Executive Director  
NAMI Minnesota  
Monica Meyer  
Executive Director  
OutFront Minnesota

Dr. Terrence J. Maag  
President  
Minneapolis Society of Internal Medicine

Brittany Robb  
Executive Director  
Safe Haven Shelter

Mary Turner  
President  
Minnesota Nurses Association

Dr. Thomas Kottke  
Immediate Past President  
Twin Cities Medical Society

Mary Kirsling  
Government Affairs Commissioner  
Minnesota Nurses Association

Estelle Brouwer  
Executive Director  
Women's Advocates

Rachael Joseph  
Executive Director  
Survivors Lead