



July 15, 2023

Dear Senators and Representatives:

As members and leaders of the faith community, we encourage you, our elected leaders, to take steps during the upcoming Special Session that will protect the lives and safety of our children. As you may know, **gun violence is the No. 1 killer of kids and teenagers** in Tennessee and across our nation. Moreover, **59% of these gun deaths are self-inflicted wounds.**

We join together to support a pragmatic, evidence-based response to firearms injury and death, [as proposed in the opinion piece authored by Senator-Doctor Bill Frist, Rev. Clay Stauffer, and Dr. Alex Jahangir.](#)

We support Governor Lee's investment in school safety and funding, and ask legislators to also take these further steps:

1. *Allow authorities to temporarily remove guns from those who pose a risk to themselves or others by enacting **Extreme Risk Protection Orders.***

Adopted by 21 states across the political spectrum, these laws have shown [early evidence](#) of reducing suicide deaths, and give concerned families and law enforcement a tool to use when someone poses a credible threat but has yet to commit a crime. When used effectively, these laws allow for temporarily confiscating the firearms of potentially dangerous people or barring them from purchasing firearms.

2. *Keep guns away from dangerous people by **expanding background checks on all firearms purchases.***

[Data](#) indicate that those legally prohibited from purchasing weapons circumvent the system by obtaining firearms through private sales. Tennessee and other states should close this loophole, as fourteen other states have done.

3. *Stop firearms from falling into the wrong hands by **implementing child access prevention and safe storage laws.***

Both types of laws promote safe and responsible gun ownership. Child-access prevention laws impose penalties on adults who allow children unsupervised access to firearms, while safe storage laws require gun owners to store firearms unloaded and in locked containers and/or disabled with trigger locks.

4. *Require firearms safety courses for ownership.*

Every licensed hunter in Tennessee must complete a hunter education course. If we know this type of education reduces firearms injuries and accidental deaths, why not apply an education and training requirement to firearm ownership? In addition to improving safety, it could also weed out individuals who only plan to use firearms for nefarious purposes or who are mentally unwell.

As members and leaders in the faith community, we stand with and represent the vast majority of Tennesseans who support responsible, sensible gun laws, like the ones we list above.

In our grief after The Covenant School shooting, we are doing the work of mourning. We stand together for responsible, sensible measures, alongside our rights, to create sustainable gun laws that will demonstrate that we value, cherish, and choose to protect our children and teens—now and in the years to come.

We ask for your leadership to save lives.

Sincerely,



Senator Bill Frist, MD
Chairman, Advisory Board, 2030 Collaborative



Rev. Dr. Clay Stauffer
Sr. Minister, Woodmont Christian Church



Kimberly Williams-Paisley
Actor, Author and Co-Founder of *The Store*

James B. Akin	Retired	Nashville, TN
Andi Ashworth	Author	Nashville, TN
Rev. V. Thomas Banks	Minister, Ashland Terrance Christian Church	Chattanooga, TN
Rev. Bethany Benz-Whittington	PCUSA Minister of Word and Sacrament	Maryville, TN
Rev. Dr. Danny Bryant	Priest, St. Mary of Bethany Parish	Nashville, TN
Rev. Ashley Buchanan	Children's Curriculum Coordinator, Woodmont Kids	Nashville, TN
Rev. Alicia Burton	Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), retired	Hendersonville, TN
Rev. Mark Calvert-Rosenberger	Pastor, 5th Avenue Uniting Church	Springfield, TN
Rev. Dr. Carol T. Cavin-Dillon	Senior Pastor, West End United Methodist Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Barbara Clark	Pastor, Trinity United Methodist Church	Knoxville, TN
Ashley Cleveland	Artist, Spiritual Director, and Pastoral Associate, Church of the Redeemer	Nashville, TN
Rev. James Cole	Antioch United Methodist Church	Antioch, TN
Sheryl Crow	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
David Dark	Associate Professor of Religion and the Arts, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Melinda Doolittle	Recording Artist	Franklin, TN
The Rev. Dr. Donovan Drake	Pastor and Head of Staff, Westminister Presbyterian Church	Nashville, TN
Martha Duff	Director, Woodmont Christian Preschool	Nashville, TN
James G. Easter, Jr.	Principal and Founder, Easter Healthcare Consulting	Nashville, TN
Mark Ensley	Minister of Worship, Lindenwood Christian Church	Memphis, TN
Alan T. Fister	Attorney, Father of 3 children and 4 grandchildren	Nashville, TN
Rev. Annette Flynn	Founder, A. Flynn Partnerships Coaching/Consulting	Oak Ridge, TN
Jerry Ford		Franklin, TN
Rev. Dr. Gordon D. Gibson	Retired, Unitarian Universalist	Knoxville, TN
Rev. John Gill	Sr. Pastor, Church of the Savior UCC	Knoxville, TN
Rev. Brandon L. Gilvin	Senior Minister, First Christian Church	Chattanooga, TN
Cathy Anne Graham	Preschool Teacher, Woodmont Christian Church	Hermitage, TN
Michael Graham	Retired Educator, Director of Music, Woodmont Christian Church	Hermitage, TN
Amy Grant	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Melissa Greene	Leader of IMAGINARIUM	Nashville, TN
Andrew Greer	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Rev. Denise Gyauch	Minister, Greater Nashville Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Nashville, TN
Derrick M. Hammond	Pastor, Oak Valley Baptists Church	Oak Ridge, TN
Rev. Patt W. Hardaway	Associate Minister, Lindenwood Christian Church	Memphis, TN
Rev. Stacey Harwell-Dye	Pastor of Missions and Outreach, West End United Methodist Church	Nashville, TN
Dan Haseltine	Artist, Jars of Clay; Founder, Blood:Water	Nashville, TN
Rev. Judi Hoffman	Pastor, St. John's United Methodist Church	Memphis, TN
Ellie Holcomb	Singer/Songwriter/Author	Nashville, TN
Chaplain Dahron Johnson	Licensed, Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ	Nashville, TN
Philip E. Johnston, PharmD	Retired, Vice Provost, Academic Affairs, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Mrs. Linda Kilpatrick		Nashville, TN

Rev. Wesley King	Associate Executive Minister, New Church Ministry of the Disciples of Christ	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Thomas Kleinert	Senior Minister, Vine Street Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Dr. Todd Lake	V.P. for Faith-Based Engagement & Church Relations, Belmont University	Nashville, TN
Charlie Lowell	Artist, Jars of Clay	Nashville, TN
Randy Lowry	President Emeritus, Lipscomb University; Settlement Counsel, Lanier Law Firm	Nashville, TN
Rev. Nathan Malone	Senior Pastor, Christ United Methodist Church	Chattanooga, TN
Rev. Farrell Mason	Author, Pastoral Minister, and Mother of 6 Kids	Nashville, TN
Rev. Janet L. Maykus	Sr.Pastor, Eastwood Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Laren McCormack	Family Life Minister, Lindenwood Christian Church	Memphis, TN
Rev. Ingrid McIntyre	Glenncliff UMC	Nashville, TN
Abby McLean	Children's Director, Woodmont Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Anne Alexander Mitchell		Nashville, TN
Rev. Geoffrey L. Mitchell	Senior Minister, Lindenwood Christian Church	Memphis, TN
Rev. Andra Moran	Singer/Songwriter/Author/Licensed Minister	Nashville, TN
Kathy Morgan		Nashville, TN
Rev. Tom Murdock	Senior Pastor, First Christian Church	Tullahoma, TN
Rev. Gordon Myers	Retired Lutheran E.L.C.A Pastor	Arlington, TN
Jennifer Nettles	Singer/Songwriter/Actor	Nashville, TN
Samuel Okpaku M.D., Ph.D.	President & Founder, Center for Health, Culture, and Society	Nashville, TN
Ralph Parsons	Retired	Nashville, TN
Charlie Peacock	Music Producer and Artist-in-Residence Lipscomb University	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Kevin Riggs	Franklin Community Church	Franklin, TN
Ash Rogers	Co-CEO, Lwala Community Alliance	Nashville, TN
Caylen Santos	Executive Director, The Shalom Foundation	Nashville, TN
Rev. Tiffany A. Sapp	Minister, Holston Valley Unitarian Universalist Church	Johnson City, TN
Mrs. Cameron Shadinger	Singer/Songwriter	Nashville, TN
Dr. Rubel Shelly	Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Religion, Lipscomb University (retired)	Nashville, TN
Rev. James Shenko	Senior Minister, First Christian Church	Livingston, TN
Rev. Charla Sherbakoff	Retired United Methodist Pastor	Knoxville, TN
Rev. Steve Sherman	Pastor, First Christian Church	Oak Ridge, TN
Rev. Paul Slenz	Retired United Methodist Pastor	Nashville, TN
Jake Smith	Executive Director, Blood:Water	Nashville, TN
Roy Stauffer	Minister to Seniors, Woodmont Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Becca Stevens	St. Augustine's Chapel; Founder, Magdalene/Thistle Farms	Nashville, TN
Dorothy Stewart	Member, Woodmont Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Kris Stewart		Nashville, TN
Debbie Taylor	Artist	Nashville, TN
Steve Taylor	Filmmaker/Recording Artist	Nashville, TN
Cathy R. Taylor, DrPH, MSN, RN	Dean & Professor of Nursing, Gordon E. Inman College of Nursing, Belmont University	Nashville, TN

Rev. Caren Teichmann	First Christian Church	Paris, TN
Pastor Susan Thisell	Messiah Lutheran Church	Knoxville, TN
Kay Thompson		Franklin, TN
Rev. Jarvus Turnley	Turnley For Tennessee "2024" State House Candidate	Springfield, TN
Louis Upkins	Author, Speaker, Entrepreneur	Franklin, TN
Dr. David Vanderpool	CEO, LiveBeyond	Nashville, TN
Rev. Billy Vaughn	Retired United Methodist clergy	Memphis, TN
Barrett Ward	CEO, ABLE	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Robert J. Weingartner	Pastor, Presbyterian Church (USA)	Franklin, TN
Rev. Dr. Donna Whitney	Pastoral Assistant, Metropolitan Interdenominational Church	Nashville, TN
Rev. Dr. Christal Williams	Regional Minister & President, The Christian Church	Nashville, TN
Morgan Wills, MD, MATS	Former President & CEO, Siloam Health	Nashville, TN
Rev. Kim Wood	Conference Minister, Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ	