



Statement of Esta Soler,
President and Founder, Futures Without Violence
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Contact: [Lisa Lederer](mailto:Lisa.Lederer@futureswithoutviolence.org), 202/371-1997

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act a Step Forward, But Not Nearly Enough – and Congress Must Finish the Work to Fully Close the ‘Boyfriend Loophole’ Now

“The gun safety legislation Congress passed Friday and President Biden signed into law on Saturday is one important step in helping make families and communities safer and healthier – but much more is needed to stop gun violence and the trauma and carnage it creates.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act will prevent some gun violence and help individuals and communities heal. We are especially pleased that it partially closes the ‘boyfriend loophole,’ which for too long has left survivors of domestic and sexual violence vulnerable to armed abusers. But the work to close that loophole is not done, and we will call on Congress to ensure, once and for all, that abusive dating partners with protective orders against them cannot access guns.

We also commend Congress for funding youth mental health and community violence prevention programs and thank Senator Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) for his leadership in addressing child trauma. Other important elements of the bill that we support include: improving access to services and telehealth under Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and crisis intervention programs; expanding and supporting state-based Red Flag laws; and penalizing gun trafficking and straw purchases. But its approach to school safety is flawed because it relies too much on law enforcement and school “hardening” strategies that do little to protect children from school violence and can lead to increased incarceration of youth of color and children with disabilities.

In addition to fully closing the ‘boyfriend loophole,’ we ask lawmakers to ban militarized assault weapons and regulate ghost guns. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is an important step forward, but not nearly enough. We need to do more to stop gun violence and make our families and communities safer, healthier and more equitable.”

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ABOUT FUTURES WITHOUT VIOLENCE:

For more than 35 years, FUTURES has been providing groundbreaking programs, policies and campaigns that empower individuals and organizations working to end violence against women and children around the world. Striving to reach new audiences and transform social norms, FUTURES trains professionals such as doctors, nurses, judges and athletic coaches on improving responses to violence and abuse. FUTURES also works with advocates, policymakers and others to build sustainable community leadership and educate people everywhere about the importance of respect and healthy relationships. More information is available at www.futureswithoutviolence.org.