



Skip Gilbert  
Chief Executive Officer  
U.S. Youth Soccer  
P.O. Box 1928  
Frisco, TX 75034-1928

Dear Mr. Gilbert:

As the founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, I'm writing to ask that you take action to address the troubling phenomenon of gun violence at youth sporting events. As children are returning to school and youth sports are kicking back into gear, there have been at least 20 incidents of gun violence at youth sporting events in the U.S. in just the last month. As you're aware, one of those events includes a man who displayed a rifle at a U.S. Youth Soccer Tournament in Utah, causing panic and chaos.

Guns have no place at youth sporting events. Children in America should be free to pursue their athletic endeavors without worrying about the specter of gun violence. Unfortunately, in many places lax gun laws have created a "guns everywhere" culture that encourages people to carry guns in places they shouldn't have them, and contributes to violence and trauma.

These recent incidents are not an anomaly. An estimated 3 million children witness a shooting every year with long lasting impacts on their well-being.<sup>1</sup> Children exposed to violence, crime, and abuse are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol; suffer from depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder; resort to aggressive and violent behavior; and engage in criminal activity.<sup>2</sup> School-aged children have lower grades and more absences when they are exposed to violence.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Finkelhor D, Turner HA, Shattuck A, Hamby SL. Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence. *JAMA Pediatrics*. 2015;169(8):746-54. Everytown analysis derives this number by multiplying the share of children (aged 0 to 17) who are exposed to shootings per year (4%) by the total child population of the US in 2016 (~73.5M).

<sup>2</sup> Finkelhor D, Turner HA, Ormrod R, Hamby S, Kracke K. Children's exposure to gun violence: a comprehensive national survey. US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://bit.ly/PwXoZN>. 2009; Morris E. Youth violence: implications for posttraumatic stress disorder in urban youth. National Urban League. <https://bit.ly/2KBpOyg>. March 2009; Fowler PJ, Tompsett CJ, Braciszewski JM, Jacques-Tiura AJ, Baltes BB. Community violence: a meta-analysis on the effect of exposure and mental health outcomes of children and adolescents. *Development and Psychopathology*. 2009;21(1):227-59.

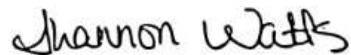
<sup>3</sup> Hurt H, Malmud E, Brodsky NL, Giannetta J. Exposure to violence: psychological and academic correlates in child witnesses. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. 2001;155(12):1351-6; Schwartz D, Gorman AH. Community violence exposure and children's academic functioning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2003;95(1):163-173.

On behalf of Moms Demand Action, one of the largest grassroots organizations in the nation, I'm formally asking you to do everything in your power to ensure that children are free to play soccer without guns being present. As leaders in the youth sports movement, it is imperative that you take a stand against the presence of guns at youth sporting events and ask parents, coaches, and volunteers to leave their guns at home.

I encourage you to review and revise your policies and procedures to ensure they prohibit guns at games, speak out against the presence of guns at youth sporting events, and proactively encourage our lawmakers to adopt policies that keep guns away from the places our children play.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. I and our volunteers stand ready to assist you in these endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Watts". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Shannon Watts