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To The People I Serve and To Whom It May Concern,

Recently, the ever-present and tragic incidents of gun violence that have victimized our communities and nation have resulted in justified concern and significant discussion. Much of the current discussion has specifically focused upon issues related to the Second Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and have disregarded, to a great degree, the full array of issues that must be considered regarding this critical public safety matter. I believe that discussions related to the right to keep and bear arms, a right that I have always supported and will continue to support, should be accomplished in an informed and meaningful manner; however, one specific issue should not be the key focus and must not become a distraction. All relevant perspectives should be included in the totality of the discussions involving our critical responsibilities of implementing well-considered and sustainable solutions to the public safety crisis of gun violence.

Forty-one years ago, I proudly took the oath, as a police officer, to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Colorado and in 1992, swore to the same oath as a deputy sheriff. In 2002, I was honored and blessed to take the oath as the appointed Arapahoe County Sheriff, and on three separate occasions since, I have taken that solemn oath as the elected Sheriff, serving all of the people of Arapahoe County, Colorado. Prior to serving in my public safety capacity, I proudly took the oath to defend the United States Constitution as a member of the armed forces of the United States of America.

In addition to my unwavering commitment to my sworn oath to support the Constitution, for all of my adult life, I have had the distinct honor and unique privilege to administer the oath to more than 2,000 individual public safety professionals who have also sworn to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Colorado. Each time the peace officer's oath has been administered, I have always provided those taking the oath with the same critical counsel of "listen closely to the words that you are about to say, this is your solemn promise of how you will conduct yourself and how you will serve others." Public servants who willingly take the oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Colorado are expected to accomplish vast and complex responsibilities; the foundation of which must be a solid commitment to all of the constitutional principles associated with their solemn promise. An informed understanding of constitutional responsibilities, a firm commitment to the entirety of constitutional principles, and fidelity to the established processes that are integral to ensuring constitutional integrity are critical for anyone who has or ever will take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Colorado.



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Although I have great respect and admiration for each of my colleague sheriffs and police chiefs across the country, I take exception with the handful of public servants who have suggested that they would reject enforcement of any “unconstitutional mandates,” specifically related to the Second Amendment. The rhetoric, of the few, related to these significant constitutional issues has been interpreted by many who believe that a person in a position of authority might be able to determine the constitutionality of an issue. If an issue were to be arbitrarily deemed “unconstitutional,” the decision to curtail further enforcement responsibilities would be in direct conflict with the concept of the balance of powers, as defined by our founders. The principle of balance of powers demands a system of checks and balances, accomplished through the distinct and deliberate separation of the authority and responsibilities of the three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. Public safety professionals serving in the executive branch, do not have the constitutional authority, responsibility, and in most cases, the credentials to determine the constitutionality of any issue. The authority and responsibility to determine the legality and/or constitutionality of a matter is to be accomplished by the judicial branch, as clearly defined in the Constitution. For a public safety professional to suggest that they can determine the constitutionality of an issue and establish public policy based upon that ill-conceived notion, would be tantamount to a peace officer arresting an individual, deciding guilt and sentencing the individual to incarceration in the county jail. This is not how our principle based, constitutional system functions – **WE ARE A NATION OF LAWS.**

Reviews of the tragedies involving incidents of gun violence typically involve three consistent and obvious themes: guns, death/injury, and the perpetrator’s mental health. Of the three themes, the perpetrator’s mental illness continues to be the one element that consistently receives the least amount of intervention or prevention efforts, while being a significant cause of the victimizations. The identification of mental illness, intervention, treatment and continued care consistently receive inadequate resources, although the impact of an individual’s unmet mental health issues become a major concern once the tragedy has occurred. The nation’s largest mental health treatment facilities are not hospitals, but are county jails and state prisons. There is a strong link between untreated mental illness and an increased risk for the commission of violent acts. The National Sheriff’s Association and the Treatment Advocacy Center studied the issues and recently published “*No Room at the Inn, Trends and Consequences of Closing Public Psychiatric Hospitals.*” The results of the research study are instructive and relevant to the important responsibilities of considering, defining, and implementing meaningful and sustainable solutions to acts of violence, gun violence and victimization.

A fourth theme related to the plague of violence and gun violence is gang involved violence and/or street crime violence. The issues of gang involved and/or street crime violence fails to receive consideration or acknowledgement from public officials, the general public or the media. Incidents involving gang related violence and/or street crime violence is prevalent in the neighborhoods of our country and consistently causes death, injury, increased incarcerations and significant victimization. Any responsible discussion that is dedicated to the timely implementation of meaningful and sustainable solutions to violence and gun violence must include the robust and well-informed consideration of the

significant impacts caused by gang involved violence and/or street crime violence, issues that effect the people and communities of our nation on a daily basis.

In consideration of the four themes related to incidents of violence and gun violence, and in anticipation of the timely initiation of the responsibilities of considering, defining, and implementing meaningful and sustainable solutions to the violence that result in injury and/or death, I respectfully offer the following as an initial list of my perspectives for your consideration. Additions to the list of perspectives and considerations will be offered as further issues are identified and the potential for meaningful solutions are better defined:

- To increase and enhance access to mental health services for at risk populations.
- To ensure more open and meaningful sharing of information related to individuals suffering mental illness with families, treatment providers and public safety officials to enhance the ability to implement intervention and prevention measures in a timely manner.
- To make schools, places of worship and business establishments safer through enhancing security and working in partnership to plan for the prevention, intervention, response and mitigation of potential acts of violence
- To proactively and vigorously prosecute those responsible for committing crimes involving firearms.
- To implement appropriate measures to prohibit the possession of weapons by dangerous or ineligible individuals through effective background checks, while protecting the privacy rights of those who legally own and safely possess firearms.
- To support and implement evidence-based practices and best practices related to the intervention and prevention of gun violence, gang violence and street crime violence.
- To acknowledge the “culture of violence” associated with the internet, television, movies and violent video games, and to take measures to decrease the impacts upon our youth and young adults.

Acts of violence and gun violence have and will, sadly, continue to victimize our community and our country. We all have an obligation to our families, neighbors, our community and our country to be engaged and to demand that well-considered, meaningful, and sustainable solutions to these senseless acts of violence are implemented in a timely manner.

Respectfully,



J. Grayson Robinson, Sheriff
Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office