Motion to adopt a statement of commitment to curbing gun-violence, introduced by Senator Todd Grantham (Philosophy)

**Purpose:** This motion seeks to align the College of Charleston with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in committing publicly to combating the epidemic levels of gun violence in our community.

**Action:**

The Faculty Senate adopts the following statement of commitment:

Given its mission to represent the views, needs, and interests of faculty in CofC's educational, research, and service programs, the Faculty Senate affirms that gun violence is a public health problem of the highest priority. As professors in a public university committed to developing ethically centered, intellectually versatile and globally fluent citizens who create innovative solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges, the Faculty Senate is committed to contributing to curb this epidemic through education, research, and outreach to our wider community.”

In order to fulfill this commitment, the Senate charges the Speaker to establish an ad hoc committee that will work with willing CofC faculty, with partners at MUSC and other public health organizations, and with partners in the wider community.

**Rationale:**

While COVID-19 has struck our community with obvious force, a less obvious epidemic has been ravaging our community for many years: gun violence. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “Firearm violence is a serious public health problem in the United States that impacts the health and safety of Americans. Important gaps remain in our knowledge about the problem and ways to prevent it. Addressing these gaps is an important step toward keeping individuals, families, schools, and communities safe from firearm violence and its consequence” ([https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/index.html)).

South Carolina is one of the deadliest states in the nation: According to the Center for American Progress, SC ranked 12th in the nation for gun deaths per 100,000 people between 2008 and 2017, while the Gun Violence Archive (GVA) recorded 2,900 deaths since 2014, well over a death every single day. (The GVA records a total of 5,305 injuries caused by guns in the same period.)

The human cost of this epidemic is not limited to the people killed and injured; the families and loved ones of the immediate victims are also traumatized by the experience and frequently suffer economic consequences on top of psychological trauma. Even perpetrators, and certainly their families and loved ones, can be seen as victims of a violent gun-culture, too, as incarceration shuts down their chances of living productive lives.
While gun-violence mostly happens on the periphery of our vision – which perhaps accounts for our apparent tolerance of these rates – the College of Charleston has been cruelly touched by it in recent years. In 2015, Cynthia Hurd, a librarian at the College, was one of the nine victims of the mass shooting at Mother Emanuel Church, and just this last summer, Tom DiLorenzo, husband of our newly appointed Provost Dr. Suzanne Austin, was murdered just blocks away from campus. CofC’s Public Safety Chief Chip Searson “perceive[s] gun violence as one of the top threats to our community and notes that “Presently, homicides and aggravated assaults are on the increase in the City of Charleston.” Chief Searson would welcome initiatives on the College’s part that address what he sees as a “mountain that law enforcement has been trying to conquer for decades.”

While the College is not in the same position as MUSC in being dedicated to public health our new strategic plan commits us to working with our students to create innovative solutions to social economic and environmental challenges, and as a public university dedicated to the full human development of all the state’s citizens, we should do whatever we can to mitigate this deadly scourge.

MUSC’s statement: Given its mission to represent the views, needs, and interests of faculty in MUSC’s educational, research, and service programs, the Faculty Senate affirms that gun violence is a public health problem of the highest priority. As health professionals in an academic medical center, we face the consequences of gun violence daily, and the Faculty Senate is committed to active partnership with community initiatives to curb this epidemic through education, research, mental health treatment, victim support and advocacy.