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Alan H. Tyroch, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Chair, Governor's EMS & Trauma Advisory Council
1100 W. 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756-3199

Submitted via electronic mail

Re: Request for GETAC to Eliminate Policy Statements on Gun Storage

December 3, 2020

Dr. Tyroch:

As you are aware, the State of Texas has a rich history regarding the use of firearms, whether it be to keep the peace or for sport. It is our current understanding that the Governor's EMS Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC), which you lead as the chair, is considering adopting a position statement on firearms policy that could include a recommendation for the Texas medical community to engage patients and families in conversation on gun storage practices.

The members of the Texas Freedom Caucus are all familiar with these practices—indeed, we have taught them to our children and grandchildren alike. It is because we know that individual Texans can implement these safe storage practices without government intervention that we question whether this Council should be involved in taking a policy stance on this contentious subject. The mission of this Council, according to your website, is to "promote, develop, and advance an accountable, patient-centered Trauma and Emergency Healthcare System." It says nothing about empowering, encouraging, or otherwise advising health care providers to offer their opinions on gun storage practices to patients, and there is no mandate that the Council adopt a position statement in this policy area. It is one thing for private medical and trade associations to adopt policy positions that reflect certain sentiments of their membership, but it is quite another for an arm of a state agency to do so.

We are additionally concerned that the Council's proposed policy recommendations are not based on sound data and could have the opposite of their intended effect. Any discussion on public policy involving firearms and safety should not fail to acknowledge, as did the 9th Circuit

Court recently, that "an average of 657 Americans—and perhaps up to 6,849 Americans—use guns to defend themselves every single day of the year." Unfortunately, the Council's agenda seems to take an opposite view of firearms, and could be used to discourage honest Texans from making a choice to carry or have access to a firearm as a life-saving defensive tool.

It is clear from the Council's discussion on October 23 that there is not a consensus on this topic and that there has been contentious debate about the language of the proposal. In fact, one member keenly observed that adoption of a position statement on firearms policy could be perceived as political activism rather than public education—a concern we strongly share. At best, this sounds like mission creep; at worst, it could further a political agenda against firearms ownership by some in the medical profession who no doubt believe that all firearms should be unloaded and locked up at all times, rendering them useless for self-defense, or not owned at all.

For these reasons, we urge the Council to reject adoption of a position statement on firearms storage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mayes Middleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rep. Mayes Middleton
Chairman, Texas Freedom Caucus