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For Immediate Release

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence Joins with The Brady Campaign, MMM-NY, Moms Demand Action, OFA-NY, NYC for Action, Faith Leaders, Medical Groups and State Legislators to Mark the 6-Month Anniversary of the Newtown Massacre and to Call on Congress to Follow New York’s Lead and Pass Background Checks

Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman Calls for Sensible Gun Laws and Thanks Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature for their Leadership

June 14, New York, NY – Today is the six-month anniversary of the Newtown, CT tragedy. New York and national gun safety advocates and elected officials assembled on the steps of City Hall in downtown Manhattan this afternoon to thank Governor Cuomo and the New York State Legislature for swiftly passing the New York SAFE Act in January and to demand that Congress follow New York’s lead and pass background checks without delay. Attorney General Eric Schneiderman led the charge: “Six months after the unspeakable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, a number of states including New York have taken bold steps to improve gun safety and crack down on illegal guns. And yet, Congress has failed even to debate the most basic, constitutionally protected measures to ensure that such a horrific event never happens again. Today we call once more on Washington to do something to stop the senseless, preventable gun violence that continues to plague our nation.”

Leah Gunn Barrett, NYAGV Executive Director agreed: “The New York SAFE Act gives New Yorkers some of the strongest protections against gun violence in the country. All Americans deserve the same. Background checks are supported by 90% of Americans and it is past time for Congress to carry out the wishes of the people, not those of the gun lobby.” Kim Parker Russell of Moms Demand Action feels fortunate to “live in a state where our Governor and state legislators worked boldly to pass the NY Safe Act.” She urged “every state as well as our federal legislators to act swiftly toward gun sense in America. The time is now.”

But states with strong gun laws like New York can only do so much since weak federal gun laws ensure that illegal guns continue to flow into our state, injuring and killing New Yorkers. 68% of traced crime guns that end up on New York streets originate from states with weak gun laws. New York City Council member Jumaane D. Williams said in a statement, “New York City’s sons and daughters remain in the crosshairs; just two weeks ago this City saw 25 people shot in one 48-hour period. Until we take action and force our federal government to curb gun violence once and for all, this bloodshed will continue.” Dr Sheldon Teperman, head of trauma surgery at

Jacobi Medical Center, said that the absence of strong federal gun laws means that “my colleagues and I are still chasing bullets in the Bronx.”

Background checks save lives. Even the current weak federal background check system has prevented the sale of almost 2 million firearms to prohibited individuals. The absence of universal background checks means more Americans are dying needlessly. In a statement New York Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy noted that in the six months since the Sandy Hook massacre “over 5,000 Americans have been murdered by gunfire and Congress still has unfinished business on its hands.”

Senator Schumer in an email statement vowed to fight on: “Common-sense gun safety measures must be implemented in order to keep deadly weapons out of the hands of dangerous individuals and off our streets, and that is why we will continue the fight to pass a federal background check bill.”

*Members of Congress unable to participate sent prepared statements from Washington, DC, all of which are attached.

About New Yorkers Against Gun Violence

New Yorkers Against Gun Violence (NYAGV) is a statewide advocacy group working to reduce gun violence through advocacy and education designed to encourage action, influence public opinion and lead to policy change. With a primary focus on New York State, the organization also advocates at the local and national levels for sensible laws, policies and practices that protect New York State residents from gun violence. There are solutions to gun violence and citizens can make their voices heard by signing up to become a member of NYAGV at www.nyagv.org.

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Statements from New York Elected Officials on the Six-Month Anniversary of the Newtown Massacre, June 14, 2013

“Six months after the unspeakable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, a number of states including New York have taken bold steps to improve gun safety and crack down on illegal guns. And yet, Congress has failed even to debate the most basic, constitutionally protected measures to ensure that such a horrific event never happens again. Today we call once more on Washington to do something to stop the senseless, preventable gun violence that continues to plague our nation.” – *Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman*

“Common-sense gun-safety measures must be implemented in order to keep deadly weapons out of the hands of dangerous individuals and off our streets, and that is why we will continue the fight to pass a federal background check bill. I have long fought for sensible gun laws on the federal level like the Brady Bill and closing the gun show loophole. Before, during and after the Sandy Hook tragedy, organizations like New Yorkers Against Gun Violence have been at the forefront of pro-gun safety issues and I applaud them for making their voices heard. I will continue to fight on behalf of the victims of Sandy Hook as well as victims of gun violence from all over the country to prevent these tragedies from occurring and I urge my colleagues to do the same.” – *Senator Charles E. Schumer*

“New York has some of the toughest gun laws in the country, but Congress has an obligation to act and prevent tomorrow’s senseless deaths by expanding background checks and ensuring that guns stay out of the hands of criminals and the dangerously mentally ill. It is time to demand real solutions and give law enforcement the tools they need to eliminate illegal guns from the street and keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people.” – *Senator Kristen Gillibrand*

“Only six months after the Newtown shootings, children and families in communities across America remain in danger. Congress must enact legislation that addresses the threat of gun violence with background checks that prevent violent criminals and people with mental illnesses from purchasing guns. It is time for action - not politics. I want to thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership and the state legislature for passing the NY SAFE Act. I urge other states to demonstrate their commitment to providing their constituents with a safer place to live, work, and raise their families by enacting similar legislation.” – *Rep. Yvette Clarke*

“In the six months since Newtown, thousands of Americans have been killed by gun violence and we continue hear about new mass shootings and preventable tragedies. Congress must follow the example set by states like New York and fight back against the Gun Lobby in order to enact strong laws that help prevent further gun violence. At a minimum, we need expanded background checks, limits on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and other basic reforms. Every day we fail to do so we lose more innocent lives to bloodshed.” – *Rep. Jerrold Nadler*

“In the six months that have passed since the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School, over 5,000 Americans have been murdered by gunfire and Congress still has unfinished business on its hands. The Senate and the House should follow the lead set by President Obama and governors, legislatures and mayors all over the country – including New York’s – and pass meaningful legislation to make our communities safer. This can be done while also protecting our Constitutional rights – Congress must act as soon as possible because every tragic shooting leaves us asking if we’ve done everything we could to save innocent lives.” – *Rep. Carolyn McCarthy*

“Six months after the horrific tragedy in Newtown, it is hard to believe that we cannot come together to pass reasonable gun safety measures. Senseless gun violence continues to shatter lives all across the country, and those who continue block common sense legislation, including universal background checks, should be ashamed of themselves for standing in the way of preventing future tragedies. How much longer will it take until these people get the message? How much longer until they understand that the majority of Americans support background checks? How many more innocent people have to die or be seriously wounded until they understand the seriousness of this problem? But we will not quit. This fight is far from over, and working together with New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, we will continue to do all we can to keep up the pressure.” – *Rep. Grace Meng*

“I am proud that New York set a national example as the first state to pass comprehensive gun control legislation following the horrific gun massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary that claimed the lives of 20 innocent children and 6 educators six months ago. But in Washington, Congress has not shown the same leadership. The failure to pass a bill which bans gun trafficking and makes straw purchasing a felony—which I sponsored with support from members of both parties—or pass bills establishing universal background checks, or banning assault weapons and large-capacity magazines is inexcusable. I strongly urge my colleagues to support legislation that will make our children and our communities safer.” - *Rep. Carolyn Maloney*

“How many more people have to die before Congress enacts common sense gun control measures to prevent senseless injuries and deaths across our nation? It’s outrageous that in many states, it’s infinitely harder to get a cosmetology license than it is to buy an assault weapon. I am so proud of Governor Cuomo and my colleagues in the State Legislature for breaking the decades-long grip of the gun lobby. It’s long past time for Congress to do the same.” – *NY State Senator Brad Hoylman*

"We know that common sense gun measures are sitting on the table. Yet six months after Newtown, and years after Congress should have acted, the gun lobby continues to block sensible action -- and we see the consequences on our streets and in our schools. Before one more innocent life is lost, it's time for Congress to pass background checks and finally act on the senseless gun violence crisis facing our country. Thank you to my colleagues on the federal, state, and city levels and the advocates who have been leading the charge on sensible gun laws." - *NY State Senator Daniel Squadron*, whose provision to strengthen NY's assault weapons ban became law as part of the SAFE Act.

“In this country, background checks are required before one may be considered for certain jobs, before one may rent an apartment and even before gaining membership to country clubs. Yet Congress is arguing over whether background checks are required before one is legally permitted to carry a dangerous weapon capable of causing death and serious injury? The 2nd Amendment

was not intended to protect the rights of violent criminals and the dangerously mentally ill to carry firearms. Background checks will ensure the safety of all law-abiding Americans. I call upon the Congress to pass background check legislation now.” – *NY State Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal*

"Though six months have passed since the Newtown tragedy, the horror of that day remains burned in all of our minds. New York State has responded by passing the groundbreaking NY SAFE Act, and now it's time for Congress to do the same. Meaningful and commonsense reforms like background checks can save lives, and we cannot allow the pro-gun lobby to block progress as they serve their extreme special interests. We need action now to prevent more of these tragedies by keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and people with severe mental illness." – *New York City Public Advocate Bill De Blasio*

“It’s disgraceful that six months after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Congress has yet to take action to pass sensible gun control legislation, including a bill to require background checks. Just last month, a 14-year-old girl was shot to death on a Queens bus and an 11-year-old girl recently shot outside her Brooklyn home might never walk again. These are just two heartbreaking stories out of many -- we cannot wait for another tragedy. Congress must act now.” – *New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn*

“Six months has passed since the tragedy of Sandy Hook rocked our nation, and sadly our leaders in Washington have learned nothing. There has been an urgency from the American people for action, and near unanimity around common-sense, basic solutions like background check legislation. Still, gridlock and extremism rule the day, bolstered by the cash-fueled lies of the NRA. Meanwhile, New York City’s sons and daughters remain in the crosshairs; just two weeks ago this City saw 25 people shot in one 48-hour period. Until we take action and force our federal government to curb gun violence once and for all, this bloodshed will continue.” – *New York City Council Member Jumaane D. Williams*

"The fact that no federal gun control legislation has been adopted by Congress six months after the tragedy in Newtown, CT is an insult to the memory of all those who lost their lives that day. Congress needs to follow New York's lead, and pass meaningful firearm legislation, starting with strong, sensible background checks. Gun violence is an epidemic in our nation, and to do nothing is an affront to the almost 90 percent of Americans who support stronger background checks. This would be a good start to a broader conversation about gun violence, which should also include a prohibition on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. The right to bear arms is not unconditional, and Congress needs to act now to address this serious issue." – *New York City Council Member Gale A. Brewer*