



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3217

August 15, 2025

Dear Congressman Nadler, Congressman Jeffries, Congressman Kennedy, Congressman Goldman, Congresswoman Meng, Congressman Ryan, Congressman Tonko, Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez, Congressman Torres, Congressman Meeks, Congresswoman Clarke, Congressman Espallat, and Congresswoman Velázquez,

Crime in New York is a serious problem. And unfortunately, many of you, my Democratic colleagues in Congress, as well as the Governor and state legislators ignore the underlying problems in favor of trying to score cheap political points.

In Governor Hochul's New York, Democrats have repeatedly enacted soft-on-crime policies that allow criminals to offend without fear of consequences. You've also ignored huge problems facing our communities, like theft, subway crime, antisemitic hate crimes, and the root causes of gun violence.

Recently, you wrote a letter urging my colleagues and I to sign onto the Bipartisan Background Checks Act. As a staunch supporter of background checks, I was happy to cosponsor this legislation, as I have many other common sense gun safety measures — including leading last year's passage of the Undetectable Firearms Reauthorization Act, in partnership with Senator Schumer and a bipartisan group.

However, expanding background checks to cover private sellers will not fix the growing problem at hand. It ignores the realities of the crime issue facing millions of New Yorkers.

According to a DOJ survey of inmates, more than half of criminals who used a firearm during their offense obtained it illegally. Additionally, 90% did not obtain it from a retail source. And the majority of the rest of this 10% obtained their guns from licensed dealers and went through a background check. Only 1.2% of these criminals obtained firearms from private sellers at a retail source and only 0.8% obtained their weapons at a gun show.

It is also important to note that most sellers at these gun shows are licensed, meaning background checks are being conducted before sale. Alleging that gun shows lead to rising gun violence is a blatant mischaracterization and villainizes both small business owners and the law-abiding Americans who practice responsible gun ownership.

Most criminals obtain their firearms by stealing them, finding them at the scene of the crime, buying them at underground markets or on the street, or as gifts from family members. The Bipartisan Background Checks Act does nothing to curb access in these ways.

Instead of addressing actual gun violence and violent crime in New York, many of you continue to hyper fixate on partisan exercises and downplay Governor Hochul's misguided soft-on-crime policies.

Cashless bail is an unmitigated disaster in the state, coddling criminals and allowing them to miss their court dates and reoffend. The Clean Slate law, supported almost uniformly by your colleagues in Albany and here in Congress, hides the records of millions of convicted felons from the public, while simultaneously impugning the reputations of heroic law enforcement officers with the repeal of 50-a.

Raise the Age has failed miserably in its intent, as teenagers are being recruited by gangs to commit violent offenses with the use of a gun, only to get a slap on the wrist in family court and reoffend.

Maybe worst of all, the Governor's lackeys on the Parole Board continue to grant parole to dangerous criminals like child rapists and cop killers, including monsters like Robert McCain, who found himself behind bars again in June. This after reoffending following his release after decades in prison for the rape and murder of Pearl River teenager Paula Bohovesky. Yet, not a peep from any of you, my colleagues, on that travesty of justice or on his release in the first place.

NYC Mayor Eric Adams has also outlined the impact of these ill-thought-out criminal justice reforms on gun violence in New York City. In 2022, Mayor Adams stated that more than 80% of individuals arrested with a gun were back on the streets. Even criminals with multiple gun arrests are being released. It is almost impossible for Congress to legislate if New York is failing to enforce even the most basic of laws governing public safety.

Many of your fellow Democrats, like Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic nominee for Mayor of New York City, have also advocated to Defund the Police and shut down prisons - which are simply absurd policy proposals. Shockingly, many of you have endorsed him in his quest to become Mayor.

For those who haven't yet publicly made a decision, New Yorkers deserve to know whether you support Mr. Mamdani or reject his candidacy on the basis of his radical policies — it is a simple yes or no question. You should let voters know exactly where you stand.

It is insane to lower spending for our law enforcement, and it only makes neighborhoods across the state more dangerous for the individuals that are there. Additionally, the concept of sending mental health workers to subway stations to prevent violent thugs from assaulting New Yorkers is ridiculous. We need more law enforcement, more funding support from federal and state agencies, and more enforcement of the existing laws on the books.

Your disastrous policies have decimated criminal justice processes in New York State. You appease criminals and villainize everyday New Yorkers who feel unsafe in their homes. I invite you to stop playing partisan politics and focus on real, actionable solutions — start by demanding a full repeal of New York's cashless bail law, raise the age, and discovery "reforms" that have released dangerous criminals back onto the street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Lawler", written in a cursive style.

Michael V. Lawler  
Member of Congress