



## CT Against Gun Violence

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**Testimony to the Judiciary Committee**  
**Lisa Labella and Ron Pinciario, Co-Executive Directors**  
**In SUPPORT of HB 6901, SB 903, and SB 904**

**April 10, 2007**

Co-chairmen McDonald and Lawlor and members of the Committee. I am Ron Pinciario and along with Lisa Labella I am Co-Executive Director of CT Against Gun Violence.

We are speaking to the committee today in support of the lost and stolen firearms legislation because felons and other prohibited users are getting guns and are committing violent crimes with them on our streets and within our homes and businesses. Gun homicides started to decline but now they are on the increase again. In fact, in 2006 gun homicides increased 38 percent vs. 2005. And more than 85 % of gun crimes are committed by prohibited users.

These prohibited users obtain these guns illegally, usually in four major ways: from corrupt dealers, from hard-core traffickers, from robberies, and from straw purchasers, i.e., persons who are not prohibited and purchase guns for those who are.

Although there is a very active black market for guns, very few prosecutions target traffickers. This legislation concentrates on two of these trafficking sources, the criminal who steals guns and the straw purchaser, first by advocating safe storage and then by closing one of the loopholes that makes prosecution of straw buyers difficult. When a gun used in a crime is traced back to the straw purchaser, he can dodge responsibility simply by claiming his gun was lost or stolen..

We are asking this Committee and the General Assembly to support law enforcement in their efforts to prosecute illegal traffickers by passing HB 6901 which requires that guns be safely stored and that stolen weapons be reported in a timely and urgent manner.

An example of one of the ways in which straw purchasing works was illustrated in the recent case against the owner of D'Andrea's Gun Case in Stratford, a business that later moved and became Guns and Safes Unlimited in Milford. The business sold roughly 1000 guns per year. According to the U.S Attorney's Office for the District of Connecticut, several criminal defendants reported using straw purchasers through D'Andrea. (including one who purchased 177 firearms from D'Andrea). One of those informers was drug kingpin Frankie Estrada, who testified that he had been purchasing guns from D'Andrea through straw buyers since 1986. Estrada testified that from 1986 thru 1990 he purchased more than 100 guns from D'Andrea in this way. He said that many of these guns were used in shootings and murders. Estrada was in jail from 1990 to 1995 but, after his release, he resumed the practice.

An interesting sidebar in that case is that one of the charges brought against D'Andrea was for failure to report missing firearms because, unlike individual owners, dealers are required to report. The fact that D'Andrea was allowed to plea to only one of the 22 charges he faced is a matter for a different discussion.

**(OVER)**



I'd like to call your attention to one letter that has been submitted to the committee in testimony. It was submitted by Elizabeth Morgan, a former member of the Middletown Board of Education. Unfortunately, she could not be here today. But her testimony says, in part,

In the 1990s when I was a Board of Education member in Middletown, I participated in an expulsion hearing for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy who brought a loaded gun to school. The boy had visited an uncle, a police officer I'm sorry to say, in another town over the weekend. Left alone for a few minutes, he removed a gun from an unlocked cabinet in his uncle's house (where there were several), hid it and took it home. The following Wednesday he brought the gun to school in his backpack. He spent the morning showing it furtively to friends. By noon word had got around that there was a gun in school, and to escape blame he slipped it into the backpack of a girl. Both were caught. Both were expelled.

The real culprit in this case seemed to me to be, not the 8<sup>th</sup> grader trying to be a big shot, but his uncle. He left loaded guns accessible in his home and - most relevant to the legislation - either failed to notice that his gun had been swiped or failed for four days to take any action to get the gun back. As a result, the lives of children in a junior high school were in serious danger. Perhaps even worse, the sense of the school as a safe place was undermined.

Members of the Committee, we hear these stories often. They are the real life situations that confront our communities, our families, and our children. I ask the committee to make these situations paramount in their consideration of this legislation, not the hypotheticals that are often raised about gun owners who may not notice that their guns have been removed from their storage places.

This legislation will make it more dangerous and more surely punitive for straw buyers to continue their practice. It will also remind gun owners to be sure their guns are safely stored. This is very sensible legislation that responsible gun owners will understand to be necessary to help law enforcement to impede some of the practices that result in guns getting into the hands of the wrong persons.

We are also submitting with our testimony a list of 40 organizations, agencies, commissions, and community groups who have signed on in support of this legislation.

**Attachments:**

**Coalition support**



**We join CT Against Gun Violence in supporting the reporting of lost or stolen firearms (HB 6901, SB 903 and 904):**

A Better Way Foundation, Hartford  
African-American Alliance, Hartford  
Blue Hills Civic Association, Hartford  
Brady Campaign To Prevent Gun Violence, Washington, DC  
Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, Washington, DC  
City Wide Youth Coalition, New Haven  
Connecticut African-American Affairs Commission  
Connecticut Attorney General's Office  
Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford  
Connecticut Chief State's Attorney's Office  
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ  
Connecticut Education Association  
Connecticut Office of the Child Advocate  
Connecticut Office of the Victim Advocate  
Connecticut Parent Teacher Association  
Connecticut Police Chiefs Association  
Connecticut State Medical Society  
Connecticut State Police Union  
Connecticut Voices for Children, Hartford/New Haven  
Daniel W. Webster, ScD, MPH, Associate Professor and Co-Director. Center for Gun Policy and Research, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health  
Each One/Teach One, Hartford  
East End Community Council, Bridgeport  
Enuf, New Haven  
Hartford Areas Rallying Together  
Hispanic Health Council, Hartford  
IMPACT (Independent Majority Political Action in Connecticut), Stamford  
La Casa de Puerto Rico, Hartford  
Latino Policy Institute, Hartford  
Mayor John DeStefano, New Haven  
Mayor John Fabrizi, Bridgeport  
Mayor Dan Malloy, Stamford  
Mayor Eddie Perez, Hartford  
Middlesex Coalition for Children  
Mothers for Justice, New Haven  
Mothers United Against Violence, Hartford  
NAACP - Connecticut  
National Council of Jewish Women, Connecticut  
People Against Injustice, New Haven  
RYASAP, Bridgeport  
The League of Women Voters of Connecticut, Inc.