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To: INSTestimony
Subject: Insurance and Real Estate Committee testimony concerning H.B. No. 6656 - OPPOSED

Connecticut has some of the strongest firearms laws in the country, and is considering tightening them even more in an emotional response to the tragedy at Newtown. The question is, will this help prevent future tragedies like this from happening?

I am a manufacturing engineer by education, training, and experience, having graduated from the University of Connecticut with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and working in manufacturing for more than ten years. One of the primary functions of a manufacturing engineer is to perform Root Cause Analysis when a failure occurs within the manufacturing process. As a service to the commissions and task forces and various legislators considering legislative responses to the Newtown tragedy, I will perform a rudimentary root cause analysis of the Newtown tragedy in regards to the proposed CT legal changes concerning firearms.

We begin with an analysis of the tragedy itself. As far as we know, since the official police report has not been released, Adam Lanza used a semiautomatic rifle to fatally shoot his victims in Newtown before committing suicide.

ANALYSIS: Was this incident enabled or caused by CT firearms laws being too weak?

ANSWER: No. Lanza reportedly attempted to purchase a rifle in the week before the shooting, but was denied. This speaks directly to the limits of effectiveness of legislation in these matters. When Lanza was unable to obtain a firearm legally, he turned to illegal means to obtain his weapon – murder. Lanza chose to murder his own mother to obtain her legally owned weapons and ammunition. Once a perpetrator has made the choice to commit homicide in order to obtain weapons, it is unlikely that they will be prevented from obtaining them.

ANALYSIS: Would reducing the general availability of firearms and ammunition to the public have prevented this incident or would it prevent future incidents?

ANSWER: No. Once a perpetrator has made the choice to commit homicide in order to obtain weapons, it is unlikely that they will be prevented from obtaining them. The recently proposed legislation specifically exempts military and law enforcement; this only encourages the potential perpetrator to target law enforcement or military personnel to obtain the weapons and/or ammunition.

ANALYSIS: Would limiting magazine capacity have prevented this incident or would it prevent future incidents? Would it have reduced the casualty count?

ANSWER: No. Limiting magazine capacity is meaningless when the perpetrator, as did Adam Lanza, carries multiple weapons. There is little difference between (3) 10-round magazines and (1) 30-round magazine; magazine change times are easily less than 2 seconds with a little practice.

ANALYSIS: Would requiring gun owners to possess additional liability insurance have prevented this incident or would it prevent future incidents?

ANSWER: No. Once a perpetrator has made the choice to commit homicide to obtain weapons, it is highly unlikely that they will then file insurance paperwork in order to fulfill a legal requirement. Those who would commit acts of capital felony murder do not obey the law; therefore the laws will not affect them.

ANALYSIS: Would requiring gun owners to store guns in a prescribed manner have prevented this incident or would it prevent future incidents?

ANSWER: There is insufficient information publically available about the Newtown incident to say if this could have prevented it. Logic however tells us that if a perpetrator is willing to commit capital homicide to obtain weapons, that perpetrator is likely to commit other crimes in order to force an innocent person to open any type of gun safe or other prescribed container.

Legislation regarding firearms has limited effectiveness in regards to criminals. Criminals by definition break the law. Logic tells us that we then should ask the deeper questions.

ANALYSIS: Can such a tragedy absolutely be prevented?

ANSWER: No. Even if every firearm were eliminated from the face of the earth, there would still exist perpetrators who wish to do harm to others. These perpetrators would use any means available, whether it be fire, poison, or even rocks. One cannot simply tell a person with psychological problems that they should not break the law. One cannot legislate sanity to the insane, or morality to the immoral.

ANALYSIS: Can the likelihood of a tragedy of this nature be reduced?

ANSWER: Yes. Although some will advocate 'hardening' schools (i.e. making them more like prisons), the short term answer lies in the use of appropriate safety devices and common sense. For fire safety, we have fire extinguishers. For safety against intruders, we should make use of personal defense weapons. There is no other effective means to reduce the casualty count of a perpetrator bent on mass murder. If we are truly interested in protecting the children and preventing such a heinous crime, then we should provide schools with the training and capability to respond to such incidents. As many have testified in recent hearings, the presence of firearms in schools and even school shooting sports teams in the past did not lead to violence. Proper training and education can make a real difference. In the longer term, we should take serious steps to reduce the motivating factors the drive perpetrators of violent incidents, and to reduce the general desensitization to violence of our youth.

Logic tells us that we cannot legislate everything away; some things lie outside of the influence of law. Bad people do bad things, and we cannot legislate otherwise. We should then take steps to ensure that we are capable of dealing with this type of incident. Pope Francis, in his inaugural mass as Pope, urged us to protectors:

“Be protectors of God’s gifts! Whenever human beings fail to live up to this responsibility, whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened. Tragically, in every period of history there are “Herods” who plot death, wreak havoc, and mar the countenance of men and women. Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be “protectors” of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.” - (Vatican Radio) Homily of the Holy Father at the Inauguration of his Papal Ministry 19 March 2013: © Copyright

While I do not espouse religion as the answer to all things, I strongly believe he has it right when he states that there are those who plot evil, and that we the people should serve as protectors against that. I oppose all legislation that restricts the ability of the good citizens of Connecticut to serve as protectors of their families and their fellow citizens. These well intentioned measures serve only to deprive the citizens of their liberty, at the cost of the very protection we seek. It is far more effective ways to deal with the roots of violence than to try to take away a single tool of the violent. Please do not pass H.B. No. 6656, 'AN ACT CONCERNING LIABILITY INSURANCE FOR FIREARM POSSESSORS OR OWNERS'. This bill is a scheme which only enriches insurers, reduces the public safety, and has no effect on the criminal element. Thank you for your time and service.

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