



BILL FINCH  
Mayor

March 14, 2013

**Dear Honorable Chairs, Sen. Joan Hartley and Rep. Stephen Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee:**

Thank you for allowing me to submit the following testimony on this very important issue.

There is nothing more important than what we are talking about today.

Let's repeat that. There is nothing more important.

We are not just talking about gun control reform. We are talking about lives. The lives of our residents. More so, if you look at the statistics, we are talking about the lives of our children.

Some are innocents. Some are struggling to find their path. Some are gang members.

None deserved to have their lives snuffed out.

There has been a lot of discussion about assault weapons and understandably so. We know all too well that these weapons can create unspeakable carnage in a shockingly short period of time.

The weapon of choice on my streets is the .38 special, the 9mm, the .357, the .45.

I support the assault weapon ban but we absolutely need to implement additional reforms to help keep illegal handguns out of the hands of our youth.

I support universal background checks on all gun sales, both at retail and private. I support limiting sales to one per month to prevent straw buyers from buying bulk and flooding our streets. A gun offender registry is smart legislation that will help us keep tabs on our most dangerous citizens. I support the regulation of ammunition.

As a councilman, senator and now mayor of the city's largest city, I have been fighting this fight for a decade.

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And during this debate since Sandy Hook, we have not heard a single convincing argument against smart gun reform.

The other day, I was questioned about whether I, as mayor, was sending a mixed message when I, along with mayors and police chiefs from Stratford, Fairfield, and Waterbury, stood next to the CEO of the National Shooting Sports Foundation and accepted a donation of 2,500 gun safety locks.

They say there was some contradiction. We say that is flawed logic. Bridgeport has always been willing to work with any group that will make our citizens safer. That does not change our core beliefs that assault weapons should be in the hands of our brave soldiers and not our citizens. That large-capacity magazines serve only to expedite the taking of lives. That universal background checks aren't some onerous intrusion on people's constitutional rights but rather a common-sense measure that will keep us all safer.

Don't we want to know if a person seeking to buy a handgun has been hospitalized for psychiatric problems within the last 24 months?

And what reasonable person could object to a background check for long guns in addition to handguns? Last we checked, a shotgun blast to the chest is no less lethal than from a Glock .40-caliber.

These are reasonable reforms that we need to act on. Will it instantaneously solve the violence problem we have in the United States? No. But it will help, along with strong policing, education reform, urban redevelopment and access to jobs.

We lost 26 precious lives at Sandy Hook and we must take every step possible to prevent that from ever happening again.

We are losing lives on the streets of Bridgeport as well.

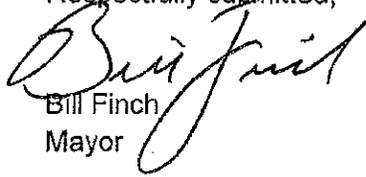
Collectively, we owe it to our residents to make Connecticut safer.

We need to act. This is not about the Second Amendment. This is not about infringing on people's rights. This is not about Big Brother.

This is about saving lives.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Finch".

Bill Finch  
Mayor