

On the morning of December 14, 2012, I first learned from a post on Facebook that there had been a shooting at a school in Newtown. The initial report stated that 1-2 people had died. My reaction was “another school shooting. Here we go again.” As the day progressed, and the news was that as many as 26 people could be dead, I realized this was not just “another school shooting.” After I learned that most of the people that had died were young students, perhaps as young as 5 or 6 years old, my heart broke. I have a 6 year old daughter who could have been one of those children. Six years ago, after the birth of our daughter, my husband and I began to make the decision of where we wanted to raise our child. One of the towns we considered was Newtown. It was safe, the schools were great and the people were so nice. The houses were less expensive than in lower Fairfield County, where we were living at the time. But for the fact that my husband’s commute to work would have been much longer than it is now, we decided to look for houses in Fairfield, where we currently reside. However, it still saddens me to think that my daughter might have been one of those children. I can’t imagine the pain that the parents, whose children have died, are feeling. However, only by imagining that it is ourselves going through this tragedy, are we able to do something to help prevent it from happening again.

Having said all that, I realized that this time “enough was enough.” I did not want to say another time, “another school shooting. Here we go again.” This shooting could have happened anywhere, Fairfield, CT, included. Prior to December 14, my daughter’s elementary school had an open door policy, unlike the locked doors at Sandy Hook. Although this is no longer the case, anyone could still shoot their way in. The only way that we can stop these shootings from happening is by instituting stricter gun laws. Assault weapons and ammunition magazines of more than 10 rounds should be banned. There should be background checks of all gun purchasers, especially at gun shows, so that guns can be kept away from criminals and the mentally incompetent. The sale of large quantities of ammunition should be reported to the ATF. These lethal weapons and accessories should be kept out of the public’s hands. Only the police and the military should be allowed to have them.

After stricter laws are enacted, I hope that another massacre like the one at Sandy Hook Elementary never happens again. However, if it does, I would like to be able to tell my children that I tried to do something to prevent it from happening. I hope that you can make that possible by considering proposals that will make us all safer, especially our children. I understand that this legislation will not keep all firearms from law-abiding citizens. I am not suggesting that we should repeal the Second Amendment. What I do hope is that our great country will become safer with Connecticut leading the way, by enacting smarter gun laws that work. It is time to protect our children, not gun manufacturers.

I would like to end with one last thought. On December 14, one of the students who died, Jesse McCord Lewis, became a hero when he ran toward the shooter, helping his friends get to safety. Why are we asking our children to do that? I believe that’s what we are doing when we allow people to have assault weapons.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I would greatly appreciate it if you would keep me informed about any legislation on this issue this session.

Sincerely,

Diana Palmentiero