



Good evening Chairpersons and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Sarah Raskin, I am from West Hartford, and I am a neuropsychologist and Professor at Trinity College. My work involves research to improve the lives of people with brain injury. I see everyday the interplay of guns and mental illness. I would like to submit testimony in favor of greater safety regulations on gun ownership and use.

Since receiving my doctorate I have slowly seen services for people with brain injury dwindle. The average hospital stay for a person after a traumatic brain injury was once six months. The latest data suggest that it is now 20 days for acute care and 30 days for rehabilitation care. The vast majority are sent home with no further treatment. The severity of impact of these injuries has not changed.

According to a 2008 CDC study, 82.8 percent of male prisoners in Minnesota reported having had one or more brain injury over the course of their lifetime. A 1986 study showed that every death row inmate in the country had sustained a serious brain injury before committing their crime. Brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability for American youth with over 500,000 school-aged kids

sustaining a brain injury each year. With appropriate treatment these children could all be productive, happy members of society. However, according to the federal Department of Education, there are less than 24,000 students nationwide receiving any additional support due to a brain injury. So it may be no surprise that 83% of people in prison were found to have sustained brain injuries.

Our children are falling through the cracks and ending up with no help, killing themselves, or killing innocent people. Instead of treatment we make it easy for them to access guns and then incarcerate them when they use them.

How are these brain injuries occurring? 20,000 people die every year from gunshot wounds to the brain. Unlike other brain injuries, only 5% of those who sustain a gunshot wound to the brain will survive. And when a gun is in the home it is 65% more likely to be used on a family member or someone known to the family than in a home invasion.

Within the past two decades, violence related deaths have, for the first time, surpassed motor vehicles crashes as the leading cause of brain injury related death. Firearm related incidents now account for 40% of brain injury related deaths while motor vehicle crashes accounted for 34% of fatalities and falls about 10%. 20,000 people die every year from gunshot wounds to the brain.

What has caused this change? Data indicate it may be due to improved safety measures that have lead to decreased incidence of motor vehicle crashes while violence related deaths have been more stable. Gun advocates like to argue that cars cause more injuries than guns. Well, that is slowly changing. Why? Because we require a license to drive a car, a safety test, insurance and registration for all cars. They must pass safety tests, too. And the license and registration must be regularly renewed.

So, let's require registration of handguns with an annual renewal, require a permit or license to purchase or carry a gun, require liability insurance and require universal background checks on all guns.

And there is no reason for citizens to have guns designed for the military. Please amend the assault weapon sales ban to require that such weapons only have one military style feature (and list the most prevalent models of assault weapons to ensure they are included) and enact a ban on the sale and possession of all high capacity ammunition magazines capable of holding more than ten rounds.

I want to close with the story of a young man, Jim, I had the pleasure to work with over several years. He lived in a neighborhood where guns were prevalent. One night while taking a walk with his

children a stray bullet hit him. This bullet was fired by someone who thought he was just "fooling around." When people say they need more than 10 rounds because they might miss with a few, ask yourself where the other bullets end up. This one left Jim paralyzed from the waist down and with a brain injury that effected his judgment and made him impulsive. Jim went through many months of physical rehabilitation and slowly, painfully returned home to his wife and children. But people in wheelchairs are easy to victimize and very often the targets of violence. And so, he made the unfortunate decision, that he needed his own gun to protect himself. He hollowed out the seat cushion of his wheelchair to make a space so that he could always have a gun on him. I explained to him that a gun is 6 times more likely to be used to hurt a family member or friend than a stranger or intruder but he was scared. He stopped coming to treatment when his insurance coverage reached its limit. We stayed in touch via telephone. Then one day his sister called me. He and his wife had had a fight. He had shot her. Her life was over. She was clear, as was I, that any other weapon would not have lead to this tragic outcome. One brief moment of poor judgment changed everything.

We cannot continue to do nothing. We cannot just wait for the next tragedy. I ask you to please make Connecticut a place that people like Jim and his wife can live safely.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah A. Raskin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "S" at the beginning.

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