

Written Testimony Regarding Gun Legislation

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Michael Enders. I live at 23 Oregon Avenue in East Haven, Connecticut. This is my written testimony regarding several bills regarding firearms that are being considered by the Judiciary Committee in a hearing that is to take place on Monday, March 11. My interest in these bills is related to the fact that I am a gun owner, have a pistol permit, and am a member of the Branford Gun Club, where I have used my pistol and my .22 caliber rifle in shooting competitions. I am an NRA certified instructor in rifle and shotgun shooting and an NRA certified range officer. I have served as a shotgun instructor for Boy Scouts in the summer camp at Camp Sequassen and as a range officer at the pistol range at the Branford Gun Club.

I have read each of the bills that the Judiciary Committee is considering, but before I give my thoughts about each bill, I want to say something about gun legislation in general. The combination of federal legislation and legislation of the state of Connecticut is already fairly comprehensive. The federal law regarding background checks keeps firearms out of the hands of at least some people who would use them to do harm against themselves or others, and Connecticut's laws regarding gun permits assure that before a person can carry a firearm legally, he or she has had some training in the safety handling of firearms. Most gun owners I know take safety very seriously. We are all concerned about gun violence, and those of us who possess and use them legally do not, for the most part, contribute to it. Although mass shootings, such as the one that took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School, get most of the attention, most victims of gun violence are not victims of mass shootings. Violence perpetrated by street gangs make a

large share of incidence of gun violence and by far the greatest share of gun fatalities are suicides. If the goal of legislation is reducing gun violence, the kind of legislation that will be most effective is that which makes sure that persons with mental health problems get appropriate treatment before they turn violent or suicidal. Controlling guns will be less effective for the simple reason that those who will obey the laws were not a threat to begin with and those who are a threat to cause harm will not obey the laws. Even if possession of firearms were made totally illegal, there would still be gun violence for the same reason that there are deaths from the use of illegal drugs, which is that people who intend to do harm will find their way around even the strictest of laws. Those who obey the laws would find themselves unable to defend themselves against violence by people who do not obey the laws.

Regarding the specific laws that are currently pending in the Connecticut General Assembly, I don't think SB 60, An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit, is necessary. Police already have the authority to stop a person and ask for identification or even to search the person if there is probable cause to think that a crime has been committed or is likely to be committed. Carrying a pistol openly is not illegal in Connecticut, so by itself, seeing a person openly carrying a pistol is not evidence of a crime. Although legal, open carrying of pistols is rare in Connecticut because of the culture here. A large share of the population would be uncomfortable at the sight of a person openly carrying any kind of firearm. For that reason, most persons who have a permit to carry, carry their pistol or revolver concealed. So, it does not seem likely that SB 60 would be used very often and adding it to a law enforcement officer's inherent power to question or search when there is probably cause of a crime in progress or about to be committed is no more than a license to harass innocent gun owners.

HB 7218, An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home, and HB 7223, An Act Concerning the Storage of a Pistol or Revolver in a Motor Vehicle are similar in that they involve the safe storage of firearms. A positive feature of both bills is each allows the gun owner to have access to his or her firearm. I understand and support the idea that firearms when not in the personal possession of the gun owner should be stored so that no unauthorized person has access to them. My problem with both bills is that safe storage is not defined within the legislation. The lack of a definition makes the issue of whether the gun owner is storing a firearm safely and creates a danger that a gun owner who in good faith thinks that his or her firearm is being stored safely subject to arrest and prosecution. When safe storage is defined, the definition should be neither too lenient nor too strict. It should not allow storage in a system in which a lock could be defeated by any determined amateur. On the other hand, it should not be so strict that the method of storage is unduly expensive or does not allow the gun owner to access his or her weapons in a reasonable period of time when needed. In the case of storage in a motor vehicle, compactness if the method of storage is also an issue.

Regarding HB 7219 An Act Concerning Ghost Guns, it is my understanding that creating a firearm for one's own use is legal under both federal and state law. I don't see the need for a serial number before the ownership of firearm is transferred. I think the fear of 3D printed guns in the current state of technology is exaggerated. 3D printers capable of making a functioning firearm are so expensive that a person who wanted to make his or her own firearms would probably choose different means. Also, a firearm made by 3D printing would be mostly plastic and not durable enough to be useful.

I support SB 940, An Act Authorizing Certain Persons to Carry Handguns in State Parks and State Forests. It allows persons who have already established that they are capable of carrying a handgun responsibly to be able to use the handgun to defend themselves or others should the occasion arise. Again, we get back to the idea that people who do not obey laws are the dangerous ones and responsible people should be able to defend themselves against them. I think so-called gun free zones are generally a bad idea because those who mean to do harm with a firearm will tend to choose soft targets, meaning people who can't shoot back. In the recent mass shootings, even the shooters who did not seem to care if they got killed tended to pick places in which it was illegal to carry a firearm so that the victims could not shoot back. They may not have cared if, after a few minutes of taking the lives of several victims, the police would eventually killed them, or they would kill themselves. The point is that if the victims had the means to fight back, many lives would be saved. Even if no one at the site is actually carrying a firearm, the fact that a site is not a gun-free zone makes it less attractive to a potential killer and the potential murderer will likely change plans to choose a softer target.

I also support HB 5227, An Act Concerning the Regulation of Firearms by Municipalities, because the laws concerning guns should be uniform throughout the state. The people impacted the most would be those the travel a lot in the state; they could not be at risk for being prosecuted if they are behaving responsibly but are caught violating some stringent local ordinance they know nothing about.

Finally, I also support HB 5870, An Act Concerning Transfer of Assault Weapons and Large Capacity Magazines. This allows one person who is authorized to possess so-called assault weapons and large capacity weapons to transfer them to another person who has the same

authority to possess the same kind of items. I don't understand why this is not already legal. The one thing that upsets me about it is the use of the phrase "assault weapons," a term which is meaningless. It seems to apply mostly to firearms that outwardly resemble military weapons, whether the functionality is the same or different. The main thing that distinguishes military rifles from the rifles that look like them that are available to the civilian ones is that the military rifles are capable of fully automatic fire or three-round burst. The civilian counterparts are semi-automatic, which means one round fired per pull of the trigger. When I am in rifle shooting competitions, most of the other rifles I see have the appearance of military weapons, but they are all .22 caliber semi-automatic rifles. My .22 caliber Marlin Model 60 is an ordinary looking semi-automatic rifle with a standard wooden stock. Many would look at the other rifles and think that they are assault rifles and mine is not, but as far as putting lead down range, they all have the same functionality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael B. Enders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M'.

Michael B. Enders

East Haven, Connecticut