

My name is Simone Paradis and I'm from Sandy Hook. I am submitting this written testimony in support of H.B. 7218, An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home, H.B. 7223 An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in Vehicles, H.B. 7219, An Act Concerning Ghost Guns and S.B. 60 An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit.

Ever since I can remember, my sister has been a very important part of my life. We ran around the playground, played with dolls, colored, teamed up to refuse eating vegetables at dinner, and more. I pushed her on the swings, taught her how to draw stick figures, braided her hair, and more. I always put band-aids on her cuts and fixed all her problems with a bad joke or funny song. Then, for the first time in our lives, there was something I couldn't magically solve for her. There was a shooting at my old elementary school when I was in sixth grade and she was in third. She was in the back of that building and I was in the band closet at my school playing tic tac toe on the floor. When we both came home, I didn't understand what had happened but I knew that the look in my sister's eyes could not be solved with a joke this time.

When I was 11, I was told that something bad had happened in my sister's school and that some children had died. All the adults were sad and serious but that didn't make sense because to me, children couldn't just not come home from school. Green hearts and crosses and news vans were suddenly everywhere, along with stuffed animals, rubber ducks, and various events where my sister and I would go get presents. We would pick out the best teddy bear, the coolest looking backpack, every single type of rubber duck, and we didn't bother questioning where the tables full of toys came from or why we got to take them home. For my sister's birthday, I got her a bag to hold all the rubber ducks that she got, and a journal so that we could make drawings and biographies for each one together.

My sister got a super long vacation, and I was so mad and jealous because I had to go back before she did and do schoolwork instead of drawing. But when I walked into the building, there were what seemed to be hundreds of adults asking about my day and my feelings, and fluffy dogs with vests everywhere. Eventually, my sister had to go back to school as well, but at another school farther away that was a lot bigger and had big security guards and a machine that we had to press a button to get into the lobby to pick her up, but the lobby had dogs and more rubber ducks once we got in.

The next year was seventh grade, the Boston Marathon bombing, where there were people running in memory of Sandy Hook. I asked my dad if bad people were targeting us. I don't remember his response.

Years passed and I slowly began to understand what had actually happened while I was braiding my friend's hair behind a tuba case in that band closet. It happens slowly, and seemingly randomly. It happens...

When the therapy dogs stop coming, when the new elementary school opens to the public, when gun lobbyists call your house and expect you to side with them when they helped sell that gun to the shooter, when you finish watching Friends on Netflix and a documentary about your elementary school shows up on the screen, when you make a joke about how you're

dying because of how much homework you have and then have an awkward moment of silence, when you see that flash of discomfort and pity in someone's eyes after they ask you where you're from, when you can't have debates about who went to the best elementary school, when you hear people talking about how your principal's autopsy showed that she was lunging towards her killer when the bullets went into her body, when you drive past your elementary school and firehouse with 26 stars on the roof every single day, when you lie in bed late at night and regret not following your teacher when she gave you the opportunity to call your parents after the lockdown ended and make sure that your sister was okay, when you go online shopping for prom dresses and see another school shooting, when you go out to a movie to try to forget for just a little while, but oh yeah, movie theaters aren't safe either, and when you get accepted into your top college on the six year anniversary, the day that someone called in a threat and you spent the entire day checking doors, windows, sounds, and faces, for any sign of danger, when your life turns into a series of marches and vigils instead of parties and dances, and when you have to beg those in Congress to do something to save lives and hear only apathy in response to your pain. And that was one shooting that I am not a direct survivor, victim, or family member of a survivor or victim of.

And if my life has been that impacted, think with me, of the 342 people that are shot every day and their friends and family. Think with me, of the lives and families of the 96 people that die from gun violence every day.

The research has been done, and it proves that these types of bills will put an end to this violence. Someone's right to own a gun should not be prioritized over children's right to grow up and to live. My sister doesn't need to have nightmares, my friends don't need to be in therapy for the rest of their lives, and America doesn't need to keep ignoring our gun violence epidemic. Let's do something about it.