

My name is Linda Scacco, and I live in West Hartford, CT. I am a member of the Social Justice Ministry of the Universalist Church of West Hartford. We are a group of people who are writing in support of HB 7218, 7223, 7219 AND SB 60. One of the core principles of our denomination is the "inherent worth and dignity of every human being." We are an inclusive and diverse community and our ministry is to live our faith in our actions in the world, whether that be feeding the hungry or advocating for legislative action on issues that violate human dignity. Our hope is for the world to be more fair, more loving and more just.

Our primary concern right now is with the proliferation of guns and gun violence in our society and we are in support of the aforementioned bills.

First, HB 7218 and 7223- Safe Storage in Home and Vehicle- We support these bills which expand the conditions under which firearms must be securely stored, including unloaded firearms, and extend the requirement to unattended motor vehicles, and which also apply the storage requirements to include minors aged 16 and 17. Fifteen year old Ethan Song of Guilford was killed in January 2018 as the result of lack of owner accountability to gun access. Passage of HB 7218, "Ethan's Law" could prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future. As Kristin Song, Ethan's mother, writes "Ethan's death was completely preventable." She asks that we honor Ethan and others like him "through action."

There are so many startling statistics that make the passage of this bill critical. Every day, eight children are unintentionally shot or killed by a gun. In more than 80% of teen suicides, the gun used belonged to a family member. In addition, in 75% of cases, guns used in school shootings come from the shooter's home or that of a relative. When unloaded firearms and ammunition are not securely stored, unintentional shooting can happen, whether these weapons are in the home or in vehicles. Please let us honor the dignity of every human life by passing these bills so that needless and unintentional deaths like these can be prevented.

Second, HB 7219, "Ghost Guns"- "Ghost Guns" are guns without serial numbers, and/or are homemade or made with a 3D plastic printer. These are untraceable weapons that are designed to evade background checks and other state laws. These guns have been used in mass shootings and attacks on law enforcement. There is no valid reason for anyone to have a "ghost gun." They are a major threat to public safety and should be banned.

Finally, SB 60- An Act Concerning the Presentation of a Carry Permit. This proposed bill would authorize law enforcement to request to see the permit for a visibly displayed weapon without the requirement of "reasonable suspicion" of a crime. While those who believe that open carry laws respect the constitutional right to bear arms, as stated in the 2nd amendment, open carry laws are taxing of both law enforcement as well as threatening to the public. The current CT law requires individuals to carry their permit but law enforcement is only able to compel production of the permit if he or she has "reasonable suspicion" that a crime is being committed.

We support the passage of SB-60 in that it that would allow law enforcement to request to see a permit whenever a visibly displayed weapon is witnessed. As public citizens, it is imperative

that this occur in that when guns are present in the public sphere, these displays are threatening and frightening as it is impossible to determine someone's intention. One concern we have about the passage of this bill, however, is related to the possibility of "racial profiling." We encourage the legislature to pass this bill, but not without thinking about how to ensure that the requests to see permits are performed respectfully with regard to race and with the continued monitoring of data to determine whether racial profiling becomes evident.

In sum, we are a group who represent a faith-based community whose principles advise us to be respectful of each person's inherent worth and dignity. Some of us have also been impacted by gun and/or domestic violence, so we have seen firsthand the indignities and suffering of human beings in our lives who have been harmed or murdered by gun violence.

We strongly encourage the passage of these four bills in the upcoming legislative session. Connecticut, not unlike other states in our nation, has seen so much damage due to gun violence both in our cities and in our suburbs. Let's change that. Let Connecticut be a beacon of hope within the larger world. Let's tell the world that we care about the indignities of human suffering and that we are ready to take action to stop the proliferation and the normalization of gun violence in our culture. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Members of the Social Justice Ministry of the Universalist Church of West Hartford, CT.

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