

3/2/2019

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

My name is Joan E. Twiggs, PhD, a resident of Bloomfield. I am a concerned citizen submitting testimony in support of bills related to gun safety. In particular I am testifying 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.

While I am active in a variety of civic endeavors, my main message and concern is as a member of the public concerned about the proliferation of guns and gun violence.

#### Safer Gun Storage in home and vehicle (H.B. 7218, H.B. 7223)

The expansion of safe storage requirements will help reduce harm, including saving lives, from multiple sources of gun violence such as unintentional shootings, crime-related gun violence (facilitated by stolen guns), suicide, school and other mass shootings. It will be a clear message to irresponsible gun owners to lock up firearms when they are not under their immediate control or be held accountable.

Nationally, eight children daily are unintentionally shot or killed by a gun. Securely stored firearms—whether loaded or not—would prevent most of these tragedies. Further, accountability will be increased in those instances that may not be prevented. The lack of owner accountability related to gun access by a minor in the case of Ethan Song of Guilford is an example.

Improved gun storage should be extended to vehicles. Both statistics and reason indicate support the argument that requiring handguns to be secured in unattended vehicles will impede a key source of stolen guns used to commit crimes.

#### Ghost Guns (H.B. 7219)

The passage of this bill to prohibit untraceable guns that are designed to evade background checks and other State laws is imperative. There are no legitimate reasons for these guns. The threat to public safety is immediate and palpable. They have already been used in mass shootings, in attacks on law enforcement and have been seized in criminal investigations.

The federal government has abdicated responsibility for public safety in the matter of this class of untraceable and unmanageable guns which are created using a variety of technologies. Therefore, the state of CT must do what it can to protect the residents of this state. The threat is already here: In January 2019 a Southington man was convicted for trying to sell a ghost gun on armslist.com. In 2018 a Willimantic teen was arrested for selling multiple ghost guns, telling an undercover agent that demand was so high, he couldn't keep up.

#### Presentation of open carry permit to law enforcement (S. B. 60)

S.B. 60 would authorize law enforcement to lawfully request to see the permit for a visibly displayed weapon without the requirement of "reasonable suspicion" of a crime. I support this bill. However, I share concerns that it be implemented without bias, particularly race-based bias.

My preference would be to disallow open carry of guns altogether. However, since this is allowed in our state, then it is important that law enforcement be able to question those who carry. I can personally attest that the mere sight of a weapon openly displayed in a public area unrelated to weaponry is enough for me to feel threatened and is very likely to lead to my calling 911 to report what I would

consider a threat. Thus it is important for the police to have authority to determine if the weapon is carried lawfully.

Some suggest that individuals should feel safer by being surrounded by guns – the so-called ‘good guy with a gun’ assertion. I am entirely unconvinced by this sentiment, particularly in this political environment in which bigotry and hatred have been encouraged by the personal example and words of too many of those in positions of public authority. There is absolutely no way to discern the internal intentions of someone who feels it important to display a gun.

I must also say that it is important for this law, as with all laws, to be implemented impartially, without bias. I am particularly concerned about the practice of racial profiling (both explicit and implicit) that exists in this country in many realms. Indeed there have been recent examples of the aforementioned ‘good guys’ who are ‘good guys while Black’ and have been assumed to be the criminal perpetrator.

All of us, especially law enforcement, must work to ensure that public safety laws such as this one are performed without racial profiling. This is a challenging matter since the racial bias in reporting a matter to police may emanate initially from the individual making the report. I completely support ongoing efforts to hire law enforcement officers who are diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and gender as an important way of addressing societal biases. I also support the collection of data and its analysis by categories of race and ethnicity to detect patterns related to the implementation of laws. For example, should this law pass and analysis indicate that permits are demanded more often of persons of color than they are of white persons, the question of racial profiling must be asked and addressed.

Sincerely,

Joan E. Twiggs, PhD  
Bloomfield, CT 06002