

CHAIRMEN:

Senator Williams
Representative Cafero

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS:

Looney, Coleman, Fonfara,
Frantz, Guglielmo,
Hartley, Witkos.,
McKinney, Williams,
Boucher, Bartolomeo, Bye,
Linares, Maynard,
McLachlan, Stillman,
Witkos, Harp, Crisco,
Gerratana, Kane, Kelly,
Markley, Slossberg,
Welch

REPRESENTATIVES:

Carter, Dargan, G. Fox,
Giegler, Godfrey,
Rebimbas, Walker, Cafero,
Sharkey, Fleischmann,
Ackert, Betts, Bolinsky,
LeGeyt, Urban, Widlitz,
Willis, T. Wood,¹
Abercrombie, Hovey,
Johnson, Megna, Ritter,
Sampson, Srinivasan

SENATOR MCKINNEY: If folks could please take their seats. We would like to begin this hearing in about five minutes. We want to give folks a chance to get settled thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Good evening.

I'm State Senate President Donald Williams and welcome to the public hearing of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence

Prevention and Children's Safety.

I want to express on behalf of Legislators our profound sadness and grief regarding the terrible tragedy at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.

When this hearing is over and all the television cameras have left the parents, relatives, and friends of those innocent children and those brave adults will still feel the pain of immeasurable loss. Our goal tonight is to listen.

We have come to Newtown to hear from the people associated with the students, teachers, staff and first responders, to hear from those who can help us as policy makers.

This is a bipartisan task force, Democrats and Republicans, because the leaders of the Connecticut State Legislature want to respond in a thoughtful way that transcends politics. My hope is that with your help and the constructive thoughts and suggestions you and hundreds of others make we can work together to make our communities, our state and our country safer for our families and especially for our children who go to school each day eager to learn with their own dreams of a better future.

So thank you for being here today. And I would like to turn now to my Co-Chairman House Republican Leader State Representative Larry Cafero.

REP. CAFERO: Thank you, Senator Williams.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

It is our pleasure to be here today to, as Senator Williams said, listen -- listen to you, the people of Newtown. I want to thank First Selectwoman Llodra for accommodating us here. I want to thank Senator McKinney and his staff for facilitating this meeting. And again, our job is to listen.

I have the privilege to introduce and explain to you the workings of the Bipartisan Task Force. The task force was created just after the start of legislative session on January 9th. Its goal was to examine, analyze and hear about three issues certainly surrounding the tragedy of December 14th. Those three working groups were created and they are the School Safety Working Group, the Gun Violence Protection Working Group, and the Mental Health Awareness Working Group. They are both bipartisan. Each group has 16 members, 8 Democrats, 8 Republicans, 8 Senators, 8 members of the House of Representatives.

My privilege to introduce the Chairs of those working groups -- the Co-Chairs for the School Safety Subcommittee we have Representative Andrew Fleischman and Senator Antoinette Boucher. For the Gun Violence Protection we have Senator Martin Looney and Representative Craig Miner. For the Mental Health Awareness we have Senator Tony Harp and Representative Terry Wood.

In order to make this a productive evening we have some guidelines. We have decided that it is important, as the Senator indicated, to hear from the families, officials and folks of the town of Newtown, and to that end we have

set an order, if you will, of how this evening will proceed.

First, we will hear from the Newtown public officials, then from the victim's families, Sandy Hook Elementary School community, first responders, clergy, Newtown residents and if time permits we will hear from the general public in that order.

We anticipate the evening ending at midnight and everyone, except the families, will have three minutes to give their testimony. We ask that everyone be respectful of the time. We're trying to hear from as many people as possible. We would ask that if a point you wanted to make has already been made to think twice about coming up to the mic.

We've asked our fellow members, who are sitting here, to limit any questions if possible -- as much as possible. Again, our purpose is to hear from you. We ask everyone to be respectful -- respectful of the speakers regardless of their opinions or their positions on issues. We ask people not to react favorably or unfavorably to any given speaker. I guess we're just asking for the common courtesies that we all observe in everyday life.

Being in Newtown it's fitting to introduce the three State Representatives and certainly the State Senator from this town. We have with us Representative Dan Carter, Representative DebraLee Hovey, and Representative Mitch Bolinsky, who are sitting here front and center.

At this time it is my pleasure to turn over

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the Chairman's gavel approximately to Senator John McKinney, the Senate Republican Leader and also the State Senator for the town of Newtown.

Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Larry, and let me thank all of you for coming tonight.

With that, we're going to start with our first speaker of the evening --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: And excuse me, Senator McKinney, if I can just interrupt with some housekeeping that I meant to mention.

In the event of a fire alarm or evacuation the school officials here have asked us to please promptly exit the auditorium through the doors located on the wall to my right or through the doors located at the rear of the auditorium.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Don.

I apologize for that.

I think we also should recognize another one of the leaders of the task force who is with us, Speaker of the House of Representatives and unknown to many a high school classmate -- high school -- a fellow high school classmate of mine Brendan Sharkey.

REP. SHARKEY: Good evening.

I -- I don't know if you -- I -- I don't want to delay the opening of the proceedings, but I

just commented to my colleague to my right, the Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney, that the last time I was here -- as well is -- is also true of Senator McKinney and our Representatives from Newtown, the last time I was here in this room was the Sunday night that President Obama was here and that was a moment in time that I will never forget, in part because of the power of what I believe the President had to say to all of us, but I think more importantly the experience of being in this community at a time of great pain and great sorry.

I have conveyed that sentiment to all of my colleagues who were not here that evening and I think I can speak for all members of the legislature, regardless of party or house, that we truly do feel your pain. We cannot possibly understand what this community is going through, but we care very deeply about doing the right thing for all of you.

Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pat Llodra, our -- there aren't enough words to describe what an amazing woman you are, but our first selectman in Newtown is our first speaker.

PATRICIA LLODRA: Good evening.

My name is Pat Llodra. I am the first selectman of Newtown. Welcome to our town and to our high school. This school, by the way, is located in the village of Sandy Hook only a few miles from where the violence of December 14 occurred.

We are pleased to have you here. We thank you for your service to our state and to your local communities and Senators and Representatives. Many of you surely began your career of community service at the local levels doing what I and members of our government do. You care a lot about something at your local level that spurred you to action, got you involved and that caring has carried you to the role that you play now as our voice doing the people's work.

This task force is very important to us. We are looking to you to help move the conversation, modify state practices and regulations about gun violence, school security, and mental health. Help us make a better Connecticut so that generations to follow will benefit from our combined actions.

There was an urgency in what we and much of the world is asking government to do. The horror of the killings we suffered on December 14 has many saying that now is the time. This time is different. This time our governments will act. We hope that message is true for Connecticut as well as at the national level.

Controversy and conflict surrounds the question of what the government action should be. I know there are no easy answers and no quick fixes. I can listen to the opposing points of view and I even find some merit in almost every position, but I cannot agree that weapons, such as the Bushmaster, have any legitimate role in a society that first and foremost seeks to keep its citizens safe.

Nor can I accept an enjoyment of firearms for sport, or hunting, or even collecting needs to

have magazines with extended capacity and I bewail a society in which weapons of considerable fire power are easier to access for many than is access to even basic mental healthcare for those in need. And I too wonder how it is that we as a society have become so desensitized to violence.

I can accept that change will be incremental, but I do demand that we get going on that right path. Let's take some of those steps to reforming our gun control policies. Let's improve access to high quality mental healthcare with an emphasis on early identification and intervention. Let's learn what we can and should do to improve school safety and then let's do it so that all school children and educators have a better chance to survive the evil intentions of those intruders who would do them harm.

I ask that you commit yourself to this journey of change for as long as it takes to make the difference needed on these issues. One legislative session will hardly make a dent in what we need to do. Please be there with us for the long haul.

Thank you for listening.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Pat.

The next speaker we would like to bring up is Selectman Jim Gaston.

JIM GASTON: Good evening.

My name is Jim Gaston. I'm a selectman for the town of Newtown. I've in Newtown for about 22 years. I have four children. They

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range in ages from 24 to 16. My youngest goes to the high school.

I'm a gun owner. I own rifles and my children and I enjoy shooting. I started shooting when I was -- and I was taught by the Police Athletic League actually. As a gun owner and someone who enjoys the sport, I can assure you there is absolutely no reason that civilians need to have or should have access to high-powered assault weapons or mega magazines.

I want to thank, just as -- just like Pat, I want to thank all of you on the task force for coming to Newtown, for doing this, for participating. This is important to us. Just as I know it's important to you. And I want to thank the Governor. I would like to thank our -- our Legislators and all of you.

I also hope that your work at this state level will reach -- will reach the national level as well and this is not -- this is not a town issue. This is not a state issue. This is actually a national issue that we're involved in.

Our hearts broke when we heard and watched the violence in Stockton, Jonesboro, Nickel Mines, at Columbine, Virginia Tech, Aurora, and Newtown, and more. Sadly there are others.

We are enveloped in gun violence in schools, in theaters, at municipal centers and businesses. Meaningful gun legislation I suggest is merited now, not later, now.

I commend the meaningful work that's being -- being done and offered by -- by the Governor as well our Senators and I would ask that you

look to our Senators as well -- Senators Blumenthal, Murphy, Representative Esty, who are working with gun control legislation. These include universal background checks on all gun purchases, the elimination of high capacity magazines and armor piercing ammunition, and the restrictions of further sales to civilians of high capacity assault weapons.

Here in Newtown I think you'll find support for groups like the Brady Foundation and the American Responsibilities Solution, which was recently established by Representative Gabby Gifford.

Other products are regulated for public services. Guns should be as well. The Second Amendment states, "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." I would submit to you that responsible, reasonable licensing and regulation for public safety is not an infringement. It is -- it's -- it is a responsibility.

And we do regulate arms. We regulate -- by definition knives are arms and we regulate switchblades, stilettos, length of knives. Those are arms by definition and we regulate those for public safety. We can do the same reasonable regulation for guns.

Finally, if I may, I would just like to read to you two statements. "There's no reason why on the street today a citizen should be carrying loaded weapons," and "You don't know -- you do know that I am a member of the NRA and my position on the right to bear arms is well known, but I want you to know something

else and I'm going to say it clear in unmistakable language. I support the Brady Bill and I encourage Congress to enact it without further delay."

That was Ronald Reagan and if Ronald Reagan can support -- can support gun regulation -- reasonable gun regulation, I would hope that your task force would find the same way.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Jim.

One of the difficult tasks of being up here is to politely ask that we not applause -- or applaud for one's position or the other so we can show respect to all positions and so we can move quickly through the night so everyone can be heard.

We're now going to hear from our police chief in town Mike Kehoe.

Chief Kehoe.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: So I -- I've already made my first mistake asking you not to applaud when we're -- we should be recognizing and always applauding for our first responders.

MICHAEL KEHOE: Good evening.

It's an honor to speak to this body on what Connecticut, Newtown and America believe is such an important matter. As we reflect on 12/14/12 and determine our next courses of action we must define the problem to -- to solve the problem.

It is my sincere belief that the problem is a violence problem and should be analyzed as such. To say we must harden and strengthen our school security measures because our schools are soft targets for mass murderers is not resolving what affects America, Connecticut, and Newton. Certainly we must strengthen security in schools. But is -- it is not the antibiotic for curing what ails us. It is but the Band-Aid on a wound. We want strength in our security in schools because of the realization that we cannot prevent these tragedies from occurring in our society. We must do better. We must be better at finding the right solutions for the many problems that persist in society.

I am confident this committee is dedicated and committed to finding the appropriate answers and responses to ensure 12/14/12 never happens again; however, it is my firm belief that if enough is not done we will see this scene repeated in our communities. I implore you not to be misguided by the many who will claim rightfully or wrongfully that we cannot and should not diminish or reduce rights afforded under law.

We have become a society of -- tied to entitlements. Our laws and policies afford us immense degree of satisfactions with privileges and freedoms many other societies do not have; however, when these freedoms are the cause of enormous pain for Americans that we have felt over the past several years with the many mass murders we have experienced then it is time to sacrifice -- and I repeat sacrifice -- portions of these entitlements to change the culture of society.

If violence in society is the real problem -- and I believe it is -- then what are the root causes and how do we fix them. All too often society's answer to conflict and uncertainty is to be violent. It could be learned behavior from the many negative influences our culture provides from military style weapons, neighborhood disputes gone bad, various violent related shows and games, and families unable to cope and understand the complexity of raising healthy families to name a few.

These factors breed a culture for violence. We must address some of these issues if we are to be successful. Our sacrifices should include the following, release all restraints attached to mental health providers and medical providers when providing law enforcement professionals with critical information necessary for police to intervene as early as possible when weapons and mental health issues are present.

Doctors should not have to worry about breaking law or their duty bound ethics code when it comes to saving lives. And patients should not be stigmatized or branded just because the police have intervened in a matter brought to the attention by police by their providers.

We must sacrifice funds and resources typically used for other societal needs to make our mental health providers the best in the world at diagnosing and treating those in need at the earliest possible age without again branding and stigmatizing the patients.

We must also make it easier to receive mental

health treatment with the worries of co-pays and deductibles. We need to have a more comprehensive package of anti-violence strategies that are taught at the youngest ages like we do with anti-bullying -- bullying initiatives adopted nationwide.

With so many negative influences being brought to bear on our children we desperately need to counteract these measure -- messages and strengthen appropriate family values. We need to do as much as possible to reduce the easy access to weapons of mass murderers.

I, like the President, believe all levels of government must strengthen the prohibition of military assault weapons that many of our citizens enjoy legally and without harm to our society. This sacrifice is necessary and certainly warranted. We need to limit large capacity ammunition clips. They -- they may serve a purpose on gun ranges, but have no rational, common sense meaning when protecting ourselves.

And finally, we must make available funds and resources to improve the security in our schools and our community. We must admit that changing our culture will take time and schools or other soft targets will become -- will be prime targets.

Thank you so much for listening and I wish you the best on your journey for changes. Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Chief, and I -- I think we figured out we can applaud for the person and not the idea. That's perfect.

The next person to testify is Tom Kuroski. Tom is president of the Newtown Federation of Teachers.

THOMAS KUROSKI: Good evening.

My name is Thomas Kuroski and I have been a teacher in the Newtown School District for all 28 years of my career.

Welcome to Newtown and thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of our members from Sandy Hook Elementary School and the entire Newtown School District.

I would like to share our concerns -- share the concerns of the educators and school staff of our community with regard to school safety. The unspeakable violence that was visited on our community just more than a month ago has shaken us all to the core and heightened our sense of vulnerability.

It has also compelled us to move with all expediency to focus our collective attention and energy on doing all we can to ensure that our schools are places where teachers can safely educate and nurture our students. The time is now for us to make sure our children are safe and our teachers are supported.

As the elected president of the Newtown Federation of Teachers, my immediate concern in the hours and days following the massacre of 20 students and six adults at Sandy Hook was for the children and the staff who were in that building, those who heard the sound of bullets and witnessed the carnage. My second concern was for those in schools throughout the district who felt the impact as buildings

were placed on lock down during and immediately after the shootings.

In addition to the loss of the precious lives of the students, colleagues, and friends who perished that day, we also lost our sense of security. All of a sudden teachers didn't feel we were teaching in a safe environment. All of sudden we experienced feelings of helplessness and vulnerability.

Many of us no longer felt capable of taking charge of our students. For some of us when we returned to our schools and classrooms we felt insecure about doing our most sacred duty, teaching and nurturing our students while keeping them safe.

It is unthinkable that any community should endure such a tragedy. Our road to healing and restored sense of normalcy will be long and littered with uncertainties. One thing, however, is certain, all of us, teachers, parents, school administrators, elected officials and our students must have a seat at the table in discussions around school safety to discuss what it will take to restore our sense of security for the children and adults in our school.

As we continue to heal and talk about the best ways to move our school district forward, it is imperative that we continue to keep lines of communication between school administrators, teachers and parents open and honest. I am encouraged by the spirit of cooperation evidenced over the past following weeks between our union, school superintendent and the school board chair.

Following the recommendations of the Newtown Federation of Teachers the school board has given discretion to individual building leaders to reallocate time for professional learning communities. Time that was set aside to address curriculum develop to professional healing communities that center around how best to serve the immediate and ongoing needs of teachers and staff, as we too, struggle to grapple with the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shootings.

It is my sincere hope that as we move forward we all continue to come together as a collective -- as a community. If educators have a voice we feel safer and more confident in our ability to teach, nurture and protect our students.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Tom, before you go. On behalf of all of us in the legislature, for you -- for all of the teachers, administrators, staff in -- in the Newtown school system, but especially those at Sandy Hook Elementary School, thank you for everything that you do for us.

THOMAS KUROSKI: Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: The next speaker on our list is Scarlett Lewis.

SCARLETT LEWIS: Hello. Thanks so much for allowing me to speak, and thank you for everything that you're doing here.

I applaud everyone's efforts to date. All of you here tonight, everyone in the audience,

everyone's motivated by love and to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again.

I want to introduce myself and my family. My name is Scarlett Lewis. I'm a single mom and I've lived in Sandy Hook for 14 years. I now have one son J.T. who is 12.

I wanted to take just a few minutes to introduce you to Jesse. Jesse was six years old. He had really soft skin and I used to grab him and pinch him every chance I got. He was getting pretty heavy at 61 pounds, but I still carried him when he was tired. I think about kissing his sleeping cheek all the time, how soft it was and how glad I am that I took the opportunity when I could.

Jesse loved rubber ducks and toy soldiers and he used to play soldiers with his older brother, J.T. And Jesse was a force. His energy was palatable when he entered a room. He was always happy, always busy and he was wondering when he was going to lose his first tooth. There are 19 others like him in addition to the beautiful other lives that were lost.

In an instant with the loss of those 26 dear, precious lives the world united. The entire world was in shock and the reaction to this was love and compassion. We need to somehow hold onto that feeling of oneness. These are our children that we're trying to protect and this is our world that we need to work together to make a better place.

Everyone has been asking me, what can I do. At Jesse's funeral I got up and addressed this question. I asked everyone to consciously

change an angry thought into a loving thought every day. After all, I said, it is simply a choice. Two days later, a 66-year old daughter -- doctor called me and told me that that changed his life. He said, I've been walking around my whole life angry and I didn't realize I had a choice.

I believe anger is a major issue in society. You do not use a gun against someone else unless you are angry or a victim. Unaddressed anger leads to feelings of victimization. A victim feels that they have no control over their situation. When responsibility for one's self has been given away and a person feels persecuted this can easily lead to rage.

Rage leads to crime, violence and murder. Our prisons are filled with examples of this. Our children need to learn that they can choose love over anger and they can choose gratitude over entitlement, and in doing so shape a happy and healthy future. If a child does not think he has control over his anger over time he can become a victim.

You can choose between love and anger if you're aware you have a choice and you can choose between gratitude and entitlement. I believe that we have to start with education and educating our children.

We started a foundation called Jesse Lewis Choose Love. We will offer classes that teach children this awareness and that you do have a choice. This choice between anger and love is one that we make when we wake up every morning all of us. It's one we make at work, at home, with our children, on the road and in our schools. Most of us are probably not even

aware that we're making a choice.

Jesse wrote a message on our kitchen chalkboard sometime shortly before he died. The message was written in six-year old writing and phonetically spelled and said, nurturing, healing, love. I found it about two weeks after he died. This message of comfort and inspiration was for me, for my family and for the world.

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation is our way of turning anger in our society into love. I truly believe that we can together make the world a better place. Together we can turn this tragedy into the event that turned the tide that empowered us as individuals, a society and the world to choose love.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Scarlett.

Our next speaker is Bill Sherlach.

BILL SHERLACH: Good evening.

My name is Bill Sherlach. My wife, Mary, was the school psychologist at Sandy Hook Elementary School for 18 years. Her career ended abruptly on that morning of December 14th, 2012, when Mary and 25 others were taken from us in a brutal, savage manner. On that day the shooter took away the central part of my life and our family's too.

I would like to comment today on three topics; weapons, mental health and parenting. Weapons, I am not a gun owner, never have and most likely never will be. I'm not an expert

when it comes to guns, magazines, or ammunition. I do, however, have a deep, deep respect for the Constitution of the United States and the Second Amendment.

I also realize that these rights were affirmed when times and armaments were very different than what we have today. I have no idea how long it took to reload and re-fire a musket. I do know that the number of shots fired in the Sandy Hook Elementary School in those few short minutes is almost incomprehensible in today's modern age.

This leads me to believe there is room for some sort of sanity to be returned to the dialogue about firearms. Some examples come readily to mind; armor piercing bullets. They are meant for one thing and one thing only, brutally kill by penetrating even a Kevlar vest. For law enforcement and military, fine. For anyone else, one has to ask why.

The ammunition used at Sandy Hook Elementary School was by all accounts meant to cause massive tissue damage. I cannot imagine that this type of ammunition would be used for hunting and I would guess that the cost of this ammunition is far greater than that commonly used for target practice.

High capacity magazines, simple arithmetic says that a smaller magazine needs to be replaced more often than a larger magazine. This alone leads to short increments of time where intervention could occur and the body count might be less, in fact 11 children managed to escape when the shooter stopped to reload.

Personal defense, whether from a tyrannical government or a home invasion, are two main arguments to the gun lobby. I don't understand them. In today's world of drones, missiles and other high tech weaponry, if a government wants to take out your house or your car you will never see it coming. And if a 10n bullet magazine -- and if a 10 bullet magazine isn't enough for you to stop a home invader, I would suggest some other method as you are probably posing a greater danger to yourself and your family than the intruder.

Next, mental health; our school and public mental health providers must be able to spend more time doing what they do best, helping children and their families. The number of professionals have been cut while the amount of regulation has dramatically increased, this mean more time doing paperwork and less helping people. Reforms are necessary that those who need help can get it instead of providers forced to have endless meetings about legally mandated bureaucracy.

Last and maybe more -- most important, parenting. Parenting is hard work. These maybe it's the hardest there is. Actively raising responsible kids require considerable effort. We need to return to the idea of having the family instill love, values, responsibilities, and yes, work ethic.

Provide the encouragement needed to succeed even when the work seems daunting. We need to turn off the computer games and do the homework. There are a lot of tired parents out there these days after working all day to make ends meet, but we know that we are the primary example set for our children. Let's

reaffirm to be the best example we can be.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you today dedicate yourself to these issues just as all the educators at Sandy Hook dedicated themselves to the children entrusted to them. Six of those educators paid the ultimate price. We need you to act bravely as a group of one. These are not partisan issues. Resist distraction from special interest and focus like a laser on returning sanity to the dialogue and taking action.

Let the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School be a turning point for this community and for our country. Take up the cause along with those who have elected you and entrusted their family's safety to so that post Sandy Hook is very different from pre Sandy Hook.

Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Bill.

Our next speaker is Dave Wheeler.

DAVID WHEELER: Good evening.

My name is David Wheeler. We lost our son Benjamin the morning of December 14th to an unstable, suicidal individual who had access to a weapon that has no place in a home.

Right now professionals in every area pertaining to this crime, from mental health to parenting, to school safety are unable to connect the necessary dots to prevent this from happening again. A far more comprehensive system of identifying and monitoring individuals in mental distress is

required. It needs to be implemented.

That a person with these problems could live in a home where he had access to among the most powerful firearms available to non-military personnel is unacceptable. It doesn't matter to whom these weapons were registered. It doesn't matter if they were purchased legally. What matters is that it was far too easy for another mentally, unbalanced, suicidal person who had violent obsessions to have easy access to unreasonably powerful weapons.

The inability of agencies to share information regarding at-risk individual's mental states, personal histories, proximity to firearms this contributed to the senseless murder of my six-year old son, 19 other children and seven adults. This is where you must focus your efforts.

First, military style assault weapons belong in an armory under lock and key. They do not belong in a weapons safe in a home. We now have more unassailable proof that this is true beyond argument as if they were necessary. Legislation must ensure that any firearm in a home be re-registered annually.

Second, at-risk individuals must be identified and continually assessed by capable mental health professionals in a way that leaves their dignity and their self-respect intact.

Most importantly, databases of accurate information must be leveraged to allow identification of where the two issues of mental health and firearms ownership intersect. There is no reason that firearms

registrations can't capture important data on all members of a household. They should be renewed regularly to allow for the fact that one's mental and emotional state may change over time.

As elected representatives it is your job to craft the legislation that keeps your constituents safe. Thomas Jefferson described our inalienable rights as life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the rights with which we are endowed for the protection of which we have instituted governments.

I do not think the composition of that foundational phrase was an accident. I do not think the order of those important words was haphazard or casual.

The liberty of any person to own a military style assault weapon, and a high capacity magazine, and keep them in their home is second to the right of my son to his life -- his life, to the right to live, of all of those children and those teachers, to the right to the lives of your children, of you, of all of us, all of our lives, it is second. Let's honor the founding documents and get our priorities straight.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Dave.

Our next speaker is Susie Ehrens.

SUSAN EHRENS: Hi, good evening.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight.

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My name is Susan Ehrens and my daughter was a student in Victoria Soto's first grade class. She survived. She and eight other children ran from that room directly past him, but not before witnessing her friends and her teacher slaughtered in front of her.

They ran past the lifeless bodies of their principal and their school psychologist, and they ran, and they ran, and they ran, they ran half a mile down the road. I know how very lucky we are and not for one minute do I pretend to understand the pain that the victim's families are going through.

The fact that my daughter survived and others didn't haunts me. That the spot they were standing at that moment in time decided their fate that day when evil that could have been stopped walked into their classroom.

I believe that our freedoms as Americans are a privilege that we've earned, that we fought for and we've defended against. I believe in all our freedoms, including the right to bear arms. I changed my opinion on that on December 14th of 2012.

I've researched the guns, the ammunition, the history of the arms debates, the laws, the politicians, the money. I was prepared to stand here today and read statistics to you because you're rational human beings. You're parents. You're friends. You're siblings. And I knew in my heart that if you heard the statistics about mentally unstable young men and semi-automatic assault rifles and the devastation that they leave behind, that as rational human beings those statistics would

move you.

They would move you to help reinstate the federal ban on semi-automatic assault rifles and high capacity magazines and enforce our existing laws, but I realized as I was going through my information to prepare that but none of those statistics and factual information mattered. You only needed to hear one statistic.

We as a nation should be ashamed of ourselves. Sandy Hook isn't the first massacre, not by a long list it's not the first, yet, nothing has changed. It wasn't that long ago when one man failed at making a shoe bomb on an airplane and from that day we all remove our shoes to get on an airplane and we do that because it just might save a life.

Reinstating that ban and enforcing our laws just might save another life. Is the list of massacres not long enough yet? We as a country are armed to levels of ridiculousness. Last I checked we're the world's superpower. We are the model to follow. We are the beacon of hope and freedom. We are Americans. We don't have civil unrest. We don't have regional factions killing one another because of differing beliefs. So why then do we have so many civilians armed with military weapons?

Weapons by their own name that aren't intended for sport and home defense. They are intended and built to kill. We are Americans. We stopped being the world's greatest country when we allow our most vulnerable citizens to be slaughtered because we might offend people by taking away their guns.

hac/gbr BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION &
CHILDRENS SAFETY

6:00 P.M.

We stopped being something to be proud of when we love our guns more than we love our children. So there's only one statistic that you needed to hear that as rational human beings to start making change now and that statistic is the number 26. So I'm asking you to do two things, that is you move forward and represent our state and our families and this town. You remember 26.

And second, because you are our voice, that you make every decision as you move forward because this is now post December 14th, 2012, that every decision you make is made as if it were your child that didn't walk out of the school that day.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Our next speaker is Nicole Hockley.

NICOLE HOCKLEY: Hello. Thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Nicole Hockley. This is my husband Ian Hockley and this is our son Dylan.

Six weeks ago today we held a funeral for our six-year old son, Dylan Hockley. I had seen his body for the first time the day before, which also happened to be my birthday. I remember looking at him in his casket and holding his hands. No parent should hold this memory of their child, neither should any parent suffer to watch their living child try to understand why his little brother is no longer with them, and wrestle with fears that this disaster will happen again.

Jake is eight and in third grade at Sandy Hook Elementary. The memories of him wailing when we informed him Dylan had died will stay with me for a lifetime. He describes December 14th as the day Hell came to my school. We all recognize December 14th as the day Hell came to Newtown.

I'm not here to remind you of our sorrow. I'm not here to proselytize about legislation. You are our elected officials and it is your duty to create and enforce the laws that protect and help us using common sense, morals, and sense of humanity to guide you.

Gun responsibility, mental health support, and proper school security are all important issues. They all have inconsistencies and loop holes which need to be addressed. I will never propose denying others their right to own a gun. I think of a gun similar to a high performance sports car. In the hands of an expert it is safe, perhaps even thrilling. In the hands of a person with mental imbalances, emotional immaturity or recklessness it is a death machine.

This state and this country has to address the shortcomings in mental health provisions that allow people with problems to slip through the net. Communities have to work to include these people not exclude them and see that they are getting the help they need.

I believe these are problems you will help create solutions for. I also believe science and technology have roles to play in implementing solutions. They can help with earlier identification and treatment of mental health issues, or even ideas like fingerprint

scanning to ensure that the only person who can pull a trigger on a gun is the legal owner, much like our laptops.

I believe innovation will help create solutions, but legislation, science and technology only go so far. Other solutions are for us to undertake; you, me, every adult in this country and we need to teach our children these solutions as well.

I'm talking about community. Knowing your neighbors, reaching out to each other, being civil and respectful, taking notice of someone who's struggling and not being afraid to intervene and help, more talking and less texting, speaking to each other in person rather than just voice over Internet, less isolated time playing video games and more social interaction, not saying I always knew he would get into trouble, and instead doing something before he gets into trouble.

In my opinion, the legislative, science and technology parts are relatively easy. Regaining a sense of community in America is harder, but it is our duty to do this, and you, our elected officials, must participate too. You are not just Legislators, you are community leaders.

On December 21st we held Dylan's memorial service. I spoke that day about looking at my calendar and reading that I had ironically entered the day as the end of the world based on the Mayan calendar. I said then, as I do now, that I do not believe that day was the end of the world, but the start of something new.

I don't profess to know what all the changes

will be, but I think it is very fitting that these changes, these new beginnings come from this peaceful, quiet place aptly named Newtown. If we don't create these solutions now and find ways forward then I fear we're saying it can't be done, that even now after December 14th that we can do no better.

I refuse to accept this response. Make the time -- make this the time that change happens. Don't give up because it seems too hard or too difficult. Make a promise to honor the lives lost at Sandy Hook and elsewhere in America by turning this tragedy into the moment of transformation that benefits us all.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Nicole and Ian.

Our next speaker is Abbie Clements. Is Abbie here?

Okay. We'll go to our next speaker, who is Neil Heslin.

NEIL HESLIN: Good evening.

My name is Neil Heslin. My son was Jesse Lewis. I'm here tonight to ask that we come with changes on firearms and a ban of assault rifles and military style rifles and high capacity clips.

Jesse perished on December 14th in Sandy Hook Elementary School to the hands of somebody who was apparently mentally unstable that these weapons fell into his possession. In defense everybody says is we need for home protection

and to protect our families and our children.

Where were those weapons the day of Sandy Hook Elementary massacre? They weren't in the hands of somebody who could protect our children or my family, my son, or the other 25 victims, they were in the hands of a mentally unstable person who took those lives of those kids and those teachers.

It can't ever happen again, anything like that, and changes need to happen with bans on those sort of weapons; military style, high capacity clips and magazines. And, you know, if -- if we didn't have those weapons it may not have stopped the -- what happened at Sandy Hook, but he could have went in with something with a smaller capacity, but there would have been less fatalities.

If we had better management -- healthcare management -- mental management maybe he -- that -- those guns wouldn't have been in the home and he wouldn't have had access to them. There's many changes that have to be made to prevent this from ever happening again and -- and the first and foremost is a ban on assault rifles and military style guns and high capacity clips and ammunition.

I -- I try to think of a reason why we would need guns and weapons like that for hunting and the only -- only thing I could think of is maybe deer management if Fairfield Hills here. You could take out 26 deer in matter of two minutes. Deer management, there's no sportsmanship to that. There's no challenge to it. There's no need in the -- for the hunters to have guns or weapons like that.

As for protecting our families and our children, what happened at Sandy Hook Elementary is proof that that doesn't work. It worked against the theory. You know, I -- I ask that we ban those weapons and I ask that we look more into mental health education and the people who have those firearms and the weapons should -- there should be strict background checks, which include health checks and mental stability of the people in the household and the people owning those weapons.

And I don't know all the facts of Alan -- Adam Lanza's mental health or mental stability, but it's very clear he had mental problems to carry on a cowardly act and commit a crime like that. And the Second Amendment people say we're trying to take the guns from law-abiding citizens. In my eyes Adam Lanza wasn't a law-abiding citizen until December 14th when he committed that crime.

The Second Amendment also states we -- we have our rights to bear arms with regular -- well regulated. Well, the firearms weren't well regulated -- the assault weapons and the high capacity clips.

When that Constitution was written, it was written over 200 years ago, it served a purpose at the time. What -- what weapons did we have -- did they -- our forefathers have? They had muskets and canons. They didn't have 30-round magazines, nor did they have the high-powered guns that we do today.

And I -- I just -- I hope that a -- a ban can come of -- out of this and the high capacity clips and the military style assault rifles and I hope that it will carry over onto a national level. I would like to see federal

regulations and licensing on all firearms and the people who carry those firearms.

And I -- I just -- I hope to God nothing like this ever happens again. And Jesse's mom was up here earlier, and Jesse had talked about a message he -- (inaudible) mom and just came to me with that message was -- it was a message that he had on the blackboard.

And it should have never happened. Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Neil.

I'm going to read off the next three or four names on our list and -- so the people who are in line can be prepared to go, and I -- I just want to make sure we had Abbie Clements is not here tonight, and then, are Chris and Lynn McDonald here? I don't believe they are.

The next two speakers on our list are -- first, Brad Greene then Tom Swelts.

Brad.

Brad, before you start here while everyone is assembling. You're here with a large group which is fantastic and speaking on behalf of the group so you've all saved us the time which we appreciate and -- and your voices are heard just as much as when they're one.

And just to remind everyone of the rules now that we're at the more public portion, everyone has three minutes to speak, and thank you for being here.

BRAD GREENE: Thank you all so much, members of the

task force for coming here to our town and for taking the time to listen.

My name is Brad Greene. As a father and a Sandy Hook resident I am making a statement today representing March for Change, a program of Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

The people you see standing with me represent just a fraction of those who have mobilized around the demand for common sense gun laws and who support meaningful change following the shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The heartbreak and the sadness we all feel when we see the pictures and hear the stories of the 26 killed is deeply personal, but our resolve to change laws which permit the proliferation of obscene levels of firepower and leave our families and communities unsafe is collective and has united us.

Many of those who have mobilized were not involved in the issue of gun legislation prior to December 14th. Unfortunately, the events in Sandy Hook provided an unwelcomed education and we have come away appalled by what our laws allow. We are incredulous at the types of assault and semi-automatic weapons and magazine clips that are considered legal.

The logic behind allowing anyone with a wad of cash to buy an arsenal without a background check is beyond our comprehension. We want to be clear that we support the Second Amendment; however, even one of our most conservative Supreme Court Justices has declared that the right to bear arms is not unlimited and not without restriction.

What we stand here demanding today and will march in support of on February 14th are common sense changes to our gun laws to make our families, schools, theaters, malls and communities safer places.

What does common sense look like? No one -- no one with a legitimate purpose needs a military style assault or semi-automatic weapon or large capacity magazine. We support their ban and removal from our state. No one with a legitimate purpose should fear permits and universal background checks on all gun sales and transfers.

Responsible gun owners should have no issue with registration and storage requirements for guns or limits on the number of guns which can be purchased within a month. We support the immediate enactment of these measures.

The world changed on December 14th and we are looking to the elected officials of our state to lead, not just this state, but the nation. As always, there is a choice. You can cower in fear from the gun rights organizations who are determined to preserve the status quo and protect the gun industry, or you can look into the faces of those standing around me and the thousands more like them in your constituencies.

You can recognize that we are growing in numbers and our voices are growing in strength and you can do what is right and demonstrate the courage that it takes to choose common sense and we trust that you will choose common sense.

Thank you for listening.

KATE MAYER: My name is Kate Mayer and I live here in Newtown and have on and off for the past 20 years. Like so many others this is where we chose to raise our family because here -- here in Newtown the village really does raise the child and now there's 20 less to watch grow up and that should never have happened, not here, not anywhere.

There's no way the right to a weapon of mass destruction in the hands of an un-vetted gunman outweighs the right of a six-year old to turn seven, the right of a family to put kids on the bus in the morning, and fully expect those kids to return at the end of the day, the right of a teacher to teach and not become a combatant on the front line of unimaginable violence.

I am sad here in Newtown trying to console my teenagers who taught these kids to swim, to console my husband who coached the siblings of the dead kids, and to smile and encourage my friends who work in the schools that it's all going to be all right, because I'm not sure it is.

I'm not confident the power of you, the decision makers, will prevail and not succumb to the power of the lobbyist and the right to arms advocates who think the right to bear arms and protect themselves in case of attack is more prevalent than the actual attack afflicting so many of our citizens, our family, our friends, our world and my town.

I firmly believe if the anti-gun violence supporters attended just one of the funerals

that I did, if they stood in line for hours upon hours and watched the heartbreak leave the funeral homes and churches and synagogues one by one, all ages, all sizes they would -- they would realize that the Daniels, and the James, and the Jessica's and the Jesses and the 16 others of the tiniest victims and their educators who tried so hard to protect them and the first responders who are now forever broken.

They would know that there is no inherent right that trumps that tragedy. This is not legislation on paper. This is not an abstract difficult to grasp, multi-dimensional concept, assault weapons were made to assault and they did that right here in my town.

Only you have the power to make a difference and I sadly do not. I'm demanding more than this face time, more than a ribbon, a t-shirt, more than making the promise. I'm demanding you keep the Sandy Hook promise.

We live together, the gun supporters and those of us who do not. We have a better chance of actually living if the common sense gun laws are enacted so that responsible gun owners can remain responsible and the rest of us can remain alive.

MICHELLE KU: I'm Michelle Ku. I'm a parent of three children in the Newtown Public Schools and I find it hard to understand why it is important to preserve people's right to own weapons designed for the military and now marketed as fun to shoot. This preservation of rights is especially egregious when it threatens my children's right to live.

In addition to being a parent I also have had a career in environmental health science, so while I have a personal perspective on gun control issues, I also see the issues from a risk assessment standpoint. The EPA, the FDA, the CDC, the World Health Organization, OSHA, NIOSH all use risk benefit analysis to understand how important it is to address threats to human health, whether the hazard is a virus, a bacterium, a new drug, radiation exposure or chemical exposure.

Why can't we address guns in the say way? There are almost 31,000 gun deaths every year, about the same number of deaths due to hypertensive heart disease or automobile accidents. There are major campaigns to prevent heart disease and billions are spent each year to make cars, roads, and driving safer, yet the gun industry remains relatively untouched by improved safety measures, depending largely on responsible gun ownership.

Additionally, many of the people who die from gun deaths have very little choice about their risk exposure, unlike hypertension and automobile, but the incredibly good news is that the vast contrast between the gun deaths and the U.S. and other developed countries should give us some pretty good clues as to how to curb gun deaths.

Cut back on the numbers and the types of guns and ammunition that are available. This can be done while still maintaining the Second Amendment rights.

Finally, I cannot appreciate the concept that there are good guys and bad guys. We're all

human and we are each capable of doing things, both good and bad, intelligent and stupid. We have mental health issues that need to be addressed and I think that's something that we can all agree that need to be taken care.

I don't doubt that most gun owners are responsible, but I also know that there are those who intend to be responsible, but make mistakes and bad decisions. From a purely statistical point of view the more guns and the more powerful they are the more likely there are to be accidents and bad decisions. The cost of those mistakes and bad decisions are human lives.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

And our next speaker is Tom Swelts and then after Tom is Peter Paradis.

TOM SWELTS: My name is Tom Swelts. I teach in this space that we are all sharing here tonight.

On December 14th at 9:30 in the morning I was conducting a class with 27 students. At the time my students were helping arrange things for an event, much like this. I was actually outside moving chairs and as I reached the front door security told me there was a lockdown and it was real.

As I entered the auditorium from the back my students were already following directions of my assistant students, placing themselves on the floor in the chair rows and lying down on the cold concrete floor. I remember it was freezing in there. I turned off the lights

and placed myself on the stage away from the students that -- realizing that if anybody came in I would have to distract that person to protect those students.

Make no mistake, I consider these students mine to protect at no cost. As time progressed we heard helicopters overhead and many sirens as police came up Exit 11 and headed to Sandy Hook School. After two and a half hours of laying on the floor the lockdown was over and things started to unfold in the press.

I realized that I had taught the shooter. I remember him, and I knew he was entitled to be here. Mental health facilities had long since been closed and schools had been become the support centers, their teachers, their counselors. Because of HIPPA we could not be told what might be wrong. We were only told to accommodate a particular student.

What made it worse was that due to the expense of sending a student like that to a private school, most of the times it wasn't done because the school system had to pay for it. What should change? Should teachers carry guns? I would quit tomorrow. I've talked to many students about this and they all think -- also think it's insane.

Should school resource officers be here? The students and I have great respect for them as long as they relate to the students. I think of Officer Friendly when I was kid. Bring him back. My fear is that budgets will eventually lead to low paying persons be given the same job and not the training and respect. The police in this school, from all across the

state, have been awesome. As one officer put it, I've never been hugged so much.

Should we get rid of assault rifles? Yes. I'm not opposed to guns for hunting, but there's no sport in these weapons, only destruction of life.

What do I propose for mental health? The school should not be penalized for referring students to other facilities. The money and decisions should -- for such actions should come from a child advisee group, not politician or school systems. The future of many people are in your hands and I would -- their lives are in your hands. To this day when I hear a helicopter I can't sleep. Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Tom, thank you.

I just want to also thank Tom for all of his help in setting up tonight's event, as well.

Peter Paradis.

ERIC PARADIS: Close. My name is Eric Paradis, but that's okay.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry about that, Eric.

ERIC PARADIS: Nope, oh, it's (inaudible) Peter. Oh, I'm sorry. I heard Peter Paradis, Eric Paradis.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Eric -- Eric, we do have you on the list, Eric.

ERIC PARADIS: (Inaudible).

PETER PARADIS: They say we're the Smith of the Frenchman.

My name is Peter Paradis. I lost my 29-year old daughter on December 14th.

I am a gun owner. Rachel enjoyed shooting as well. There's been words of responsibility and responsible gun owners thrown around here and common sense. I believe education is part of that and all the courses that I've taken -- and I've taken a few for gun ownership -- what was never taught was what we did with the gun after we came from the range and I don't believe it's put it in the closet is where it belongs. It needs to be in a gun safe.

If we had responsible gun ownership this would have never happened, but that goes back again to education. When you teach somebody about guns it's not when you're carrying it. It's not how you're using it. It's also about where you store it and what you do with it.

I can't see penalizing people that enjoy shooting. I stopped hunting a long time ago, but I do enjoy shooting and I do it as a sport, so do my daughters and my sons, but none of them have access to my firearms. And I believe that part of this problem we have is because they're not educated what to do with their firearms.

As an owner of firearms it is not a 9:00 to 5:00 job. It's a 24/7 job and this -- we need more of this.

Mental health has been thrown around here too. Something has to be done here. I can attest

that people slip through the cracks and their names should be going -- should be on a list that's available to all of our law enforcement agencies so that this tragedy doesn't ever happen again and that's called education and that's what we need.

Education isn't going to bring back 26 people, not my daughter, but it may spend -- it may help another 26 people and it can't stop here. We need to make the connection so that the law enforcement people can fill the holes so that this does never happen again. And again, that's all education.

You people hold it in your arms and your hands to make this happen and I would expect to see that. I own no AR style weapons, and I probably will never own any now, and after listening to the people that came up here, I have a different viewpoint on a few things, but I think responsibility all goes back to the beginning and I don't feel like we should own an arm unless you know what to do with it when you're done with. And again, that's education.

My daughter looked forward to coming down here to -- to Newtown. We are not Newtown residents. She came down here -- she was only (inaudible) third day back and she was pretty excited about it, and I know how the day ended and it wasn't as exciting.

So it's in your hands and you need to do something about this. We don't need 30-round clips to kill a deer. We don't need AR style rifles to go hunting or target shooting. We need -- action is what we need and we need it before long. We can't let this happen again

and unfortunately common sense says that whatever you do here today is not going to prevent that from happening.

I know people don't want to hear about putting guns in schools, but a resource officer can be much more than just a gun-carrying person. They can be an educator and they would solve a problem that we have immediately, and this is what I think we need to go, but I would like to stress education on all levels and you need to something with the mental health part of it.

This person should have never been allowed to -- to get the guns as easily as he did and then went back to having somebody that was responsible in the household. She paid the ultimate price for not being it and I would hate to see that happen again.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Paradis.

We'll hear now from a number of folks connected with the Sandy Hook School community, including teachers and parents. I will start with Mary Ann Jacob, to be followed by Richard Marotto.

MARY ANN JACOB: Thank you for taking the time to listen to us this evening.

My name is Mary Ann Jacob. I'm a parent of two kids who go to school here at Newtown High School, who attended Sandy Hook School. I'm a former PTA president from Sandy Hook School. I'm a member of the legislative council, but I'm here tonight to talk to you as a staff

member at Sandy Hook School and tell you a little bit about the day of the shooting when we lost 26 of our family.

The day started like any other day with kids coming in the library picking out books, delivering lunch orders to the office, and meeting their teachers and saying hello to their friends.

Vicky Soto came in the library first thing in the morning to pick out books that she could use in her classes that day, bemoaning the fact that she had spilled coffee all down the front and what a bad day it was starting out to be for her.

At about 9:30 a.m. the classes had just begun. We had recited the Pledge. We had spent our moment in silence and the kids were settling in for another -- another day.

In the library, our librarian was beginning a class with our fourth grade -- one of our fourth grade classes talking about research skills. I was at my desk and I heard the intercom go on, and I paused for a moment and looked up and heard a few strange sounds and what I thought was a cry and -- but it was very muffled, and so I got up and went over to the phone to call the office and say, girls, what are you doing in there, the intercom is on, and from under her desk one of the staff members picks up the phone and says, they're shooting in the building.

At that moment I realized what I was hearing. Of course, who thinks when they're in an elementary school at 9:30 on a Friday morning that what they're hearing is shooting. So I

yelled to our librarian that we needed to have a lock down and I ran across the hallway to the two classrooms that were directly across from us and yelled in their doors and slammed their doors shut.

We went back in our room and did what we thought was locking all five of the doors in the library and put the kids in the position that they knew was where they went for the lock down. That's the beginning of the problem that our kids even know what to do when there's a lock down.

We listened to what we knew were hundreds and hundreds of shots -- gunshots, which seemed to last forever. Then one of the doors of the library opened and we saw the butt of a rifle come around the corner and very quickly realized it was a police officer. Of course unbeknownst to them, I guess, the shooting had stopped by then, but it sure didn't feel like it to us.

He yelled to us to lock the door. We crawled back over there and realized the door wouldn't lock. So we had three adults -- four adults, 18 children and we -- we need -- we needed to get to someplace more secure, so we crawled across the floor with these 18 kids through our kitchen into a closet, for lack of a better word, and locked the door and pushed two file cabinets in front of it, and there we waited.

We actually talked about what we would do and how we would know if things were over because we were in a room where (inaudible), and at that point we couldn't hear anything anymore, and we decided it would be okay if we just

stayed there all day because really our job was to keep the kids safe.

They began to get a little nervous at this point because we were out of what our normal routine was for a lock down, so we just happened to have some crayons and paper and we handed them out to the kids and encouraged them to color, draw, while one of -- the one person in the room who had a phone shakily was trying to text people and asking us who should I call for you, and I -- I couldn't remember anybody's phone number, because on my phone all I do is push a button with somebody's name, and I didn't know who to call.

My phone was on my desk. Unbeknownst to me my two sons, who were here, were frantically texting me saying, mom, mom, are you okay and not getting an answer, because they were here in the high school and they knew exactly what was going on.

Twenty-six of our friends, colleagues, and children were brutally murdered that day. When I came out of the building I was asked to help with the injured. There was a whole triage area set up and there was one person in it and as time went by nobody else came out of that building alive.

Something needs to change. We need to be able to send our kids to school without fear. We need to help our children who have mental illness. We need to remove violent video games from the hands of our children. We need to ensure that gunmen cannot get into our buildings. Make no mistake, if there was police officer in our building that day he would be dead.

Adam Lanza didn't knock on the door and ask for permission to come in. He shot his way through the door barely seconds after he got out of his car. Nobody needs a gun that can kill 26 people and shoot hundreds of rounds of ammunition in three minutes.

Licensing, background checks must be required. We need to provide mental health services for our children so they don't shoot their mothers four times in the face while they're in bed and come and kill 26 people at an elementary school.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Richard Marotto to be followed by Sandy Goldsberry.

RICHARD MAROTTO: I just want to say thank you for you coming to us.

My name is Richard Marotto. I live in Sandy Hook. I'm a proud and grateful parent of a surviving first grader at Sandy Hook School.

My daughter is in Mrs. Roig's class, the very first room as you enter the building. By the grace of God, Ms. Roig was able to corral her students and stuff them and herself into a small closet sized bathroom within seconds when darkness entered their beloved school.

What those kids heard during, and saw after they were rescued are heart wrenching. Only now is my child starting to talk and draw pictures of what happened. My heart breaks for her, and everyone else directly impacted, by this senseless and preventable tragedy.

I'm not here to tell you my opinions on how to stop this from happening again because I don't know what we can do. Our society is so saturated with guns and violence. I don't think any one thing will help. I leave the answers to my community and elected officials, but we do need to start acting now.

A lot of people are quoting a piece of paper written a long time ago, known as the Constitution of the United States and the Second Amendment. I would also like to quote from a piece paper we seem to be forgetting written a long time ago, ironically by some of the same people who gave us the right to bear arms, the United States Declaration of Independence; that quote being, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The emphasis for me is -- is on life. The right of life means that man cannot be deprived of his life for the benefit of another man. My child, our children, your children are entitled to those rights.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Sandy Goldsberry to be followed by Melissa Horan.

SANDY GOLDSBERRY: Thank you all so much for being here.

My name is Sandy Goldsberry and I've been living in Sandy Hook for the last year and a half. My nine-year old daughter was at Sandy Hook on December 14th. She was one of the lucky ones who came home that day, but since she is autistic and I'm unable to converse we

may never know what she saw or understands about what happened or how it may affect her in the future.

While I fully understand that we will never be able to be rid of all violence, including gun violence, I believe we should make it extremely difficult for anyone to kill 26 people in just a few minutes.

I served in the Army during peacetime. I was well trained in the use of the M16, which is a semi-automatic assault rifle, similar to the one used at Sandy Hook. I can't speak for wartime, but I can tell you that in peacetime, even though we were well trained we were not allowed to keep our weapons with us or simply store them in a personal locker. When not in use these weapons were stored in the company armory.

The only time we were issued live rounds was when we at a well-regulated range for target practice and qualification and then we were given the round -- live rounds only immediately before we were ready to shoot. During our training it was also made very clear to us exactly how devastating the bullets from these weapons are to the human body.

If the military in peace time does not allow fully trained soldiers to keep their weapons and live rounds why would we think its okay to let fully untrained civilians own and use these weapons. Assault rifles are -- assault rifles are not effective for game hunting and they are not practical or needed for home defense. They were developed for wartime for the single purpose of use in battle.

Regarding school safety, I firmly believe that arming our teachers is not the answer. I don't want to send my child to any school that has anyone other than a trained police officer carrying a loaded weapon. I believe it would add to the unreasonable stress that many of our teachers are already under.

Imagine being a teacher and having to take a loaded weapon with you to school just to remain safe. Now, consider that you're a woman in classrooms with young men much bigger than you are. You now have the added stress knowing that you're responsible for the gun not getting into the wrong hands. It's just not fair to our teachers that they have this added burden.

If Adam Lanza hadn't had a weapon with the increased firepower, like the semi-automatic weapon he used, it's very possible that he wouldn't have been able to gain entry into the school in the first place. I believe banning semi-automatic weapons is the -- is the biggest step we can take towards safety in schools.

I urge Congress to immediately enact a permanent ban on the manufacture, sale and possession of semi-automatic assault type rifles, like the one used at Sandy Hook, on high capacity magazines and on ammunition designed to pierce armor or to shatter after the -- the impacting the body. And I support the legislation that has been proposed by the organization Connecticut against Gun Violence.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Melissa Horan to be followed by Robin Riley.

MELISSA HORAN: I wasn't really prepared to speak today, but I heard my name so I'm here.

My name is Melissa Horan. I am a parent of a second grader at Sandy Hook and a 13-year old middle school, who also went to Sandy Hook.

Lately there's been a lot of talk about our rights and the defending of those rights, but let us not forget that on December 14th, 20 our youngest citizens lost their ability to ever exercise those rights. Their voices extinguished by two failures on our behalf; the inability to identify the mentally ill and appropriately treat -- treat those individuals; and the expiration of the assault weapon ban in 2004.

There's no reason anyone should own a weapon of that caliber. And really the only other thing I have to say that hasn't -- that's already been said here before, is that we need to tighten the background checks on gun purchases, not allowing gun purchases without a background check at guns shows.

I recently read an article today on CNN about a known schizophrenic -- diagnosed schizophrenic who walked into Walmart, purchased a rifle in Oklahoma, three days later he purchased two handguns at a gun show and a month later killed his mother. That individual was clearly mentally ill. The system knew it and he purchased three guns and took a life.

That's all I have to say.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Robin Riley. Is Robin Riley here?

Denise Correia. I wasn't pronouncing that right. Is Denise Correia here?

Casey Khan and after Casey Khan we will go to Joe Wasik.

CASEY KHAN: Hello. Thank you very much for this open forum.

My name is Casey Khan and I live in Sandy Hook with my wife and four children. My third born son attends Sandy Hook Elementary in the preschool program in assisting with specials needs, which this program has now been transferred to the Newtown High School, which is -- it's a great -- it's great to have preschoolers in the high school. It's kind of a refreshing thing.

I wanted to recognize and commend the efforts of our son's teachers and occupational therapists, as well as the efforts of Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach in assisting our son with his special needs. In fact, just one month prior to the tragedy at the school we met with our son's teachers Dawn and Mary at Sandy Hook.

Ms. Hochsprung was wearing a fairy godmother costume the day of our meeting because she was promoting fairy tales to the young students. I could tell that she had the good of her students in mind, especially when she supported us in our concern that our son should not enter the kindergarten too early. Never did we imagine that she would be a hero

that would die while trying to protect innocent children. She was a fairy godmother indeed.

I would also like to offer an alternative perspective on gun control, one which is informed by growing up in a gun culture in the southwest, as well as serving in the United States Marine Corps. Accordingly, I'm well trained in the use of firearms and the proper use of deadly force. The issue has been raised by many people and a lot of people have said, why would anybody in this room need to have one of these assault style weapons, or a military weapons, or high capacity magazines.

Not one person can answer that question. I -- I hope that I can. The answer is, is that military weapons and weapons with high capacity magazines can provide an effective means of repelling a home assault engaged by multiple assailants.

While on its face it might seem ridiculous for those of us who live in wealthy, upper middle class areas like Newtown to have the capacity to repel such an assault, it is not ridiculous for those who live amidst the dangers of the inner cities, as well as cities in this state and it is not ridiculous for those who live amidst the violence along the U.S. and Mexico border.

When discerning how to defend a family, a home, or other property one must be afforded the flexibility to exercise what they deem is an effective way to provide for such defense. It is unfair, unjust and detrimental to the common good to deny someone their basic human right to exercise such discretion in defending

their life, liberty and property.

Martin Luther King recognized this basic principle when he penned his famous, Letter from a Birmingham Jail, as he engaged in the discussion of just and unjust laws. He said, "We must to see as the federal courts have consistently affirmed it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain basic constitutional rights because that quest may precipitate violence. Society must protect the robbed and punish the robber," and this has been affirmed in the Heller decision that the basic Constitutional right to bear arms is a right that should not be impaired merely because others may precipitate violence.

Further restrictions on -- and bans merely protect the robber and give them to the advantage over the robbed. The lawless do not observe gun control's restrictions or regulations and this leaves good and lawful citizens at an unjust disadvantage against the lawless, such an unjust situation created by more gun restrictions rather -- renders further gun control no law at all.

And all -- I'll just that I belong to no NRA or any other sort of organization. This is just my own thoughts and I thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Joe Wasik. Is Joe Wasik here?

Eric Paradis.

Eric will be followed by Andres Nikitehyuk.

ERIC PARADIS: Good evening.

I too am a Sandy Hook father. I have a third grader in Ms. Amanzio's class. I also have a sixth grader who spent her kindergarten through fourth grade years enjoyably at Sandy Hook.

Right now I am fortunate -- I'm one of the fortunate. My wife and I, we get to tuck our children in to bed. We get to make their lunches for the next day and we get to hear them complain about their homework and other slights about school, and I cherish those moments now thanks to the faculty and staff at my daughter's school.

And we have a choice to make. We have a choice to protect our children, protect our communities, or continue the path of unending violence that led to December 14th. By filling our communities with more and more guns, more and more weapons, we will only more and more destruction and violence and loss of life.

I too was a military member. I served six years in the Connecticut Army National Guard. I know about M16s, 45s. I was also a heavy tank assault gunner before I switched and became a medic at the New Haven Armory. So I know these weapons do not belong in our home. They do belong in our armories as part of our well-regulated militias. That's where they belong, not on our streets, not in our communities.

We can choose to support our families in trouble with better access to medical care, mental healthcare. We can free up our schools to help our children in need. Help identify them and help provide the services that they

so desperately need, or we can choose the status quo.

We can let the gun lobbies, ALEC, and other organizations who have corporate interests over our interests decide our path for us. I would rather not. We need to choose to protect our children, protect our families and protect homes.

I am part of Sandy Hook and I choose love.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Andres Nikitehyuk.

ANDRES NIKITEHYUK: My name is Andres Nikitehyuk.
Thank you for having me.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: I did the best I could,
apologize.

ANDRES NIKITEHYUK: I'm not a specialist on mental healthcare so I will not cover that subject. What I would like to talk is about my personal experience and my views on weapons in the light of what happened in our town.

My son, a third grader, at Sandy Hook Elementary went to school on Friday, December 14th like on any normal day. At school that day he was the classroom helper with another child and had the job of walking the attendance sheet to the principal's office. Moments later bullets almost ended his life.

He was in the hallway with his friend when the shooter entered the building and the terror began. He describes his experience as hearing gunshots, seeing bullets come by them, when he turned toward the source of gunshots to see

what's going on, thankfully, smog clouded his view.

Our kids were so lucky. A heroic teacher, Abbey Clements, whom we can never sufficiently thank, saw them in the hallway and pulled him to the -- her classroom. I have no way to describe how I feel about the wonderful kids, teachers, and families that were not as lucky.

How hard I, and we all, wish we could run the tape back and prevent this tragedy. Here's what I want to say to each and every one you. I used to be part of the silent majority of the people around this beautiful country that saw how weaponized and unsafe our society became, but kept our silence.

I thought guns are a part of American history, that many people know how to hand them and keep them safe, that our politicians know what they're doing, care about us and the situation will be corrected. Columbine, Virginia Tech, Aurora chipped at those beliefs, but I averted my eyes.

On Friday this belief has been shattered for me, my wife, my relatives and friends and most important, for my kids. It's been long overdue, but it's clear to me I have to speak up and to make my words heard in Hartford and in Washington. So now I ask every Connecticut Legislator why would we would think -- is it three minutes?

SENATOR WILLIAMS: No, please continue. That just -- that marks the three minute timer, please continue.

ANDRES NIKITEHYUK: Why would we think that assault

weapons and high capacity magazines should ever be in hands of civilians? There is no sensible reason for that. I want Connecticut legislature to ban and remove them from our state.

Why are modified M16s and Kalashnikovs sold to civilians in this country? There is no sensible reason for that either. I want Connecticut Legislators to implement a law that bans Connecticut based companies from design, manufacture and importation of any military, or military derived weapons intended for sale to civilians.

What exactly is an appropriate civilian use for hollow point bullets that explode inside of your body on entry, which were used in this shooting? Who can explain it to me? They are barbaric weapons designed to incur the most possible damage to human body. I want Connecticut legislature to ban and remove them from our state.

Why do we have age limits, written and practical tests to acquire driver's license, but have nothing that would be at least as rigorous for acquiring a weapon that can take out countless lives? I want Connecticut legislature to implement permits and universal background checks on all sales and transfer of firearms and age limits on operation of firearms and a statewide firearm operation test, modeled after the test of operating a motor vehicle; written and practical.

Why do we have to periodically renew registration for cars, but do not have to it for weapons? I want Connecticut legislature to implement firearm registration for all

firearms with annual renewal, also model after the registration of motor vehicles with safety inspections every three years.

Why there is no legal accountability for negligence in storage of something as dangerous as guns? It makes absolutely no sense. I want Connecticut Legislators to make negligent gun owners liable. If any person gains access to firearms and injures himself, other people, or causes damage to property.

Why does the entire society has to pay such a high price in precious human lives and huge economic cost, while firearm's manufacturers and dealers collect profits off our grief. The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation estimated the economic impact from gun violence cost our nation 175 billion in just 2010, that would be \$564 for each of us, or its \$35,000 per each gun that is sold in this country in a year.

So one gun you buy for \$500 the damages associated with the gun in that year would be 35,000. Why does this society have to pay such a high price in grief in economic impact for someone to make -- to make profits? I ask Connecticut legislatures to implement taxes on firearm manufacturers and dealers to recoup those costs to our society fully.

I -- we had victims and family of people who died in Columbine, Aurora, Virginia Tech. You cannot believe how much trauma and economic hardship people have in those communities. Some of them have such disabling injuries they need on the order of millions of dollars of medical treatment. They live on something. Who is going to take care of them? Who?

Someone can say that you need a human to shoot a gun. What they're not saying is guns allow human feelings of malice and hate to be amplified. They amplify them in a way that's God-like, final and irreversible. It takes away someone's life with just a slight pull of an index finger. Only the most responsible, trustworthy, law-abiding and well-trained individuals should ever have that power.

You see the people across the country are now taking action and you as Legislators have to do it too. You have to protect our children and our society. We don't want a repeat of 2011, when banning high capacity magazines used in this shooting was not even brought to a vote. Please everyone think of what you want this society to be for our children, if we will be able to save our children to adulthood.

My son is going to be okay, but my heart goes out to all of the families and my hope is that we can pull together and help pass some laws to prevent a terrible tragedy like this from every happening again.

Enough talk, as responsible Legislators, and I know each of you are, please act now to keep our children safe.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: I just want to check and see if they were out of the room when I called their names before; Robin Riley, or Denise Correia, or Joe Wasik.

If not, then we'll move on to first responders.

hac/gbr BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION &
CHILDRENS SAFETY

6:00 P.M.

I'm just going to read the list of five names we have here, so you're prepared to go in order, and we also have, in addition to these five, I think, 84 people signed up to testify, and we want to make sure we hear from everyone.

So I'm just going to reiterate that we're going to ask you to keep your remarks to within three minutes time to the degree possible and that we refrain from applauding for ideas that we like because we want to save time to make sure we hear from everybody and get everybody's viewpoint.

With that, our first speaker is Chief Douglas Fuchs of the Redding Police Department. After Chief Fuchs will be Laurie Veillette, Brian Shimer, Mike Collins and Dr. William Begg.

DOUGLAS FUCHS: Good evening.

My name is Douglas Fuchs and I've been a police officer for 24 years. I'm the immediate past president of the Connecticut Police Chief Association and I stand before you this evening as a the Chief of Police for the Redding Police Department, a resident of the town of Newtown and one whose children attended the Sandy Hook School.

The morning of December 14th, 2012 at about 9:30 I was in my police car leaving the town of Redding and heading to the Hartford region. As I reached the town line I began to hear radio transmissions from Newtown. These transmissions appeared to involve what we in law enforcement call an active shooter response to a school.

While I did not know to which school the Newtown Police had responded, as I did not hear the original dispatch, it was readily apparent that my fellow police officers in Newtown were actively engaged in clearing one of our schools in response to an invasion of sorts.

By 9:45 that morning I found myself, along with two other Redding Police Officers and Redding EMS, standing in the parking lot of the Sandy Hook School. What transpired during the course of the next many hours, many days and many weeks and the tasks performed and the visions observed I have a feeling my brain, along with many others, will never, and I supposed thankfully, never properly process.

So I stand before you with six fairly simple requests. Six requests, one for each of those civilian first responder heroes, our teachers, our administrators who did everything imaginable to try to save 20 of our kids. And while these six requests certainly do not cover everything which needs to be discussed relative to this issue, I would think that these would generate little controversy among responsible gun owners.

Request one, ban high capacity magazines to everyone, but law enforcement. No one has yet to make a cogent argument as to why anyone other than a police officer or the military needs the ability to fire so many bullets without reloading.

Two, restrict assault rifles to law enforcement. While I'm not an avid marksman I am told they are fun to shoot and I guess I get that, but many would like to take their

Ferrari out at 3:00 in the morning and drive 140 miles on I-84, but we don't let them. One might be a very accomplished driver and the traffic virtually non-existent and the vehicle, a finely tuned machine, but for some region -- reason the Connecticut legislature -- that's you all -- frowns upon that form of activity.

I'm also told that some hunt with these types of rifles, and just last week a firearms transfer slip crossed my desk to notify me of the sale of a bushmaster AR15 assault rifle to one of my residents purchased with, by the way, their hunting license, not even a firearms permit.

Number three, give access to mental health records to those tasked with issuing firearms permits. Our only check currently is accomplished when the applicant themselves checks no to the question posed on their own application.

Number four, give police chiefs a greater latitude in denying pistol permit applications for cause. When I denied a pistol permit application to an individual who perjured himself on the application relative to a prior criminal arrest record, I was told by the Board of Firearms Permit Examiners to arrest him for perjury.

Oh, yeah, and by the way, I was also instructed to issue the permit because even though he lied about it, the arrest for which he perjured himself was not a disqualifying offense.

Number five, require all firearms hand and

lawn guns to be secured and by secured I mean secured, not by means of a \$3 lock that can easily be manipulated or defeated.

Number six, give Connecticut law enforcement the tools with which to best protect our residents and add tougher sentences for those who violate guns laws. Our police officers on a daily basis place themselves in harm's way to recover illegal weapons only to find the violator back on the streets far too quickly.

And give every Connecticut municipal police officer statewide arrest authority for all violations of law, not just felonies. Our law enforcement response to the Newtown would have been made a great deal easier if all officers who responded were so empowered.

I will close in much the same manner as I began. On December 14th I stood on the grounds of the school, which shares the name of the community in which I live, and is now synonymous with what is arguably the greatest national human tragedy of our generation.

I implore you to turn that local tragedy for us into an opportunity for all.

You know, my son asked me the other day when I was getting dressed, as I wear a green and black mourning band over my badge, which is usually reserved for law enforcement officers who have fallen in the line of duty. He said, dad, how much longer are you going to wear that? And I thought about it for a couple of minutes and kind of teared up and I said, you know, I think probably forever and I would implore each and every one of you to go out and buy something green.

I don't know if a coin, piece of cloth that you wear, many of you are wearing ribbons or a pin and keep it on you, so as this discussion continues through the legislature you remember why it is that we're here, why it is that we're having this conversation and as the discussions continue we make the right decisions for the right reasons.

I thank you all very much for being here.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Chief.

Laurie Veillette followed by Brian Shimer.

LAURIE VEILLETTE: Good evening.

And thank you for allowing us to talk this evening.

My name is Laurie Veillette. I am a volunteer EMT for Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Corps and I staff every Friday.

In the early morning of December 14th, 2012, our ambulance crews responded to Sandy Hook Elementary School and received three patients with multiple gunshot wounds. Two patients did not survive their injuries. The gun and ammunition the shooter used at the Sandy Hook Elementary School were designed to do the most damage in the shortest amount of time and clearly this was achieved.

I have been an EMT for Newtown for 10 years and I have worked with many patients in the midst of behavioral crisis; anguished people lashing out with words, or with physical violence, both towards themselves and others.

While transporting these patients for care I have listened to stories of regret and remorse for the wrongs they committed during their sometimes extended episodes of psychological unbalance and rage.

In their darkest hour people can do the most grievous things, please don't allow the tools of mass destruction be at their fingertips. Please don't let the perfect storm of untreated mental illness and unfettered access to military grade weaponry happen again.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Brian, thank you, and after Brian is Mike Collins and Dr. William Begg.

BRIAN SHIMER: My name is Brian Shimer. I'm an EMT.

First, I would like to remind all the attendants that we are citizens of the Constitution state. We are and have remained a people of freedom since our first fundamental orders were written. As a child, a son of Connecticut, I was taught the importance of freedom and at all costs it must be defended.

As an Eagle Scout I walked the halls of the Capitol which are watched over by the statues and pictures of the founding fathers. As a medic serving with Charlie Company 82nd Airborne Division 3rd Brigade Support Battalion, I stood and raised my hand, just as you all have done and swore in an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

I was sent to restore order to a nation of people who are unable to defend themselves against a tyrannical dictator. I have witnessed gun violence and I have seen atrocities. Now, upon my arrival home we make laws that undermine the most sacred of documents, ideas and freedoms that we, of a people, have been afforded.

Neither the size of the magazine, nor the style of the rifle will affect the actions of evil. Those wishing to do harm to those wishing to do good will never be swayed by the laws of man. By limiting the law-abiding citizen we are allowing the criminal to prevail. The pen is mightier than the sword, but the sword is sharper and cuts much deeper.

We cannot punish the nations for the select actions of an individual for we swore to protect our nation from enemies both foreign and domestic. I believe that a national background check should be done every time a gun is sold. If you have a medical instability and you have been diagnosed, you should not own a gun until you've been cleared by a psychiatric doctor, but that stays on your record.

And how about instead of a criminal background check we call it the Gun Ownership Background Safety Check. If you don't pass, you don't get a gun; and if you're caught illegally with a gun you go to jail for a very long time.

Now, as far as gun ownership I believe that every single person has the right to own a gun. If you own a shotgun, a rifle, a lever action cowboy gun legally that's fine. By legally I mean that you've passed the Gun

Ownership Background Safety Check and the gun is registered and that list is private, not public, and kept with the state, and if that gun is to be sold you're to verify with the state that the person it's being sold to meets all the requirements.

I believe that there is no need for fully automatic rifles. They're hard to aim, even on a tripod or affixed to a platform. They spray too many bullets at one time to be effective for any -- anything but cover fire and stopping vehicles. I have used many different types.

As for magazines size, someone hell bend on killing people will not care how many times they have to reload. For semi-autos I feel that a 20 round magazine should be the limit. Although, I believe you should not be allowed to have the same fully automatic rifles carried by our military and some special police forces as long as you meet all the requirements of Gun Ownership Background Safety Check and the gun is registered you may carry the same number of rounds they do; however, if you break any gun laws you go to jail.

No one needs high explosive rounds, ones that go boom, and anyone caught selling these or any illegal guns, grenades, rockets or warheads should probably go to jail. As a country we spend so much money and time creating laws to prevent the criminals that we don't enforce them. We already have laws. Yes, there are some loopholes in screening and mental health. Address those issues before you limit those currently obeying the law.

Is it not the right of every American to be seen innocent until proven guilty? All you would do is create more criminals. By educating youth on gun safety and consequences of their actions maybe we can save some lives.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: And Brian, thank you for your service to our country as well.

Our next speaker is Mike Collins.

MICHAEL COLLINS: Good evening.

My name is Michael Collins. As with all present tonight, my thoughts and prayers go out to the families and victims of December 14th, 2012.

I'm a Sandy Hook resident. I am a Connecticut AEMT working in Danbury and Brookfield. I also volunteer at Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Corps. My thoughts here are my own. I do not represent any of my employers.

I have a CT pistol permit. I'm an NRA pistol instructor and an NRA range officer. I'm a member of the Fairfield County Fishing Game Protective Association. I hunt both in and out of state. I consider myself a very responsible gun owner.

Connecticut by all admissions have some of the strongest firearm's laws in the country. Some of the proposals being put forth by lawmakers recently involve outright banning of semi-automatic weapons and magazines over 10 rounds. In my mind, this is the wrong approach.

The person responsible for this outrage was a person who planned it and carried it out. Yes, he got the weapon by killing his mother. I have not yet heard the official reply to her weapons storage situation. We must give the blame for this to Adam Lanza, not the Connecticut firearm's owners who have done nothing illegal or un-responsible.

By cutting down the numbers of cartridges in a magazine you are putting people in a dangerous position. Just has been said when you have to reload you are vulnerable. This applies to a person defending himself, as well a criminal. Only the criminal is not going to observe these magazine capacity laws. The ordinary licensed person will. I don't want to be outgunned in a situation that I cannot walk or run away from.

So as for the so-called assault weapons, there are literally millions of these across the country legally owned and responsibly used. I have been through quite a few of the gun control political pushers in my time. All that usually happens is that more restrictions are put on the law-abiding citizens and the people responsible for the outrage to begin with totally ignore the rules. That's what criminals do.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Dr. William Begg. I hope I pronounced that correctly.

WILLIAM BEGG: You did.

Thank you.

My name is Bill Begg. What's my inspiration for coming tonight? I'm the parent of three Newtown students. I'm a grammar school track coach. I'm the president of the medical staff here at Danbury Hospital. I'm with the newly formed group of United Physicians in Newtown that formed in response to the December 14th shootings. I'm the EMS medical director for Newtown and this region, and I'm an ER doctor that was on shift December 14th.

What's my goal in the next two and half minutes? My goal is to somehow convince you Legislators that gun control measures that you hopefully will enact will make a difference. The -- the gun lobby has allowed a lot of research so I had to go overseas for research.

In Dunblane, Scotland in '96 -- in Dunblane, Scotland '96, 29 first graders were shot, their teacher and then the gunman shot himself. It -- just a few years before in -- in England a 27-year old with two semi-auto rifles shot 31 people, killing 16 of them and he killed his mother and he killed himself.

What did those Legislators do? They over a 10 year period, between '88 and -- and '96 -- I guess that's eight years -- they enacted real legislation. Did the legislation make a difference right away? Actually it didn't. Not only didn't make any difference, there was a -- actually bump in gun violence, but where do they stand in 2010?

In the U.S. since 1996 we've had over 20 mass murderers. Great Britain has had one. Okay.

In -- in 2010 the United States had about 32,000 gun deaths, Great Britain, 155. Gun legislation take a while to -- to come to fruition, but it works.

If you actually own a gun and it's in your home, because you're waiting for that person to show up that's going to terrorize your house, let me give you some stats. You have 25 more -- 25 times -- not percent -- 25 times more chance you're going to get killed from your own gun, or -- or your wife, or your spouse, or your kids -- 25 times more chances you're going to die from your own gun than you getting killed from that intruder.

States that do have gun control do -- do actually have a lower chance of violence for their citizens. In summary, what I'm asking for is you consider a stronger assault bans -- assault weapons ban, elimination of the sale of automatic -- semi-auto weapons, restriction on the size of magazine clips, number of rounds, extend background checks and also please let us do some gun research that's real.

From the mental health side, what -- what galls me is the same folks that are saying well, I get it we want to balance the budget -- the same people that are saying let's -- let's take care of guns -- or allow guns to be out there, are the same ones that's saying let's -- let's focus on mental health.

Yet those are the same ones that are saying let's cut services, so and what are the first service to be cut, mental health. So I'm not even asking you to add mental health services. I'm just asking please don't cut anymore. Allow me as a medical doctor when I see a

patient, or one of my colleagues see a patient -- when I educate them on the effects of alcohol or tobacco, safe sex, motor vehicle accidents, can I please talk to them about the risks of gun violence. Please.

I -- I want to recognize the -- the -- you know, 20 years in the ER I never broke a tear, but this has affected me. I want to recognize the valiant efforts of the Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Corps, even though Mike Collins and I disagree, I respect him immensely and Laurie Veillette and the rest of the Newtown EMS, thank you so much for your services.

To the families, we -- we -- to the families, on behalf of the ER we -- we tried our best. We tried our best. And to you lawmakers, my mom and my dad were both Connecticut State Representatives and I asked mom, I said, mom, why won't they make a change? Why do you think? She says, well, you know, they -- they have their party lines and they have their lobbies and they have their -- they may not be senior. I said, do you think this one time they'll make a -- they'll -- they'll make the right decision and, you know, she said, yeah, I think this one time. So I'm asking you, please make the right decision on behalf of Newtown and Connecticut and the United States.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Rabbi Prayer.

Is Rabbi Prayer here? Thank you.

And after Rabbi Prayer speaks we will move to residents of Newtown beginning -- well, actually we'll hear from George Coleman with

Commission on Children and then we'll move to residents of Newtown.

SHAUL PRAVER: Thank you very much to this committee. Thank you for everyone assembled here for this opportunity to speak.

The existence of automatic and semi-automatic weapons has only been about 40 years on the market. So my question is, how is it working out? How is this experiment going for us? If you think it's going well, don't do anything, leave it as it is, but if you think that it's not going so well, then do the right thing.

Concerning the regulation of guns, if you were trying to guard a fort would you lock the front door and leave the backdoor open? What is the question about universal background checks? Why -- what's the logic for not having them?

One of the aspects that is common for all spree shooters is that they were bullied in schools. We need to have -- well, we already do have anti-bullying laws, but I reviewed those laws and there's no way that you can really enforce them. Please enforce them.

As upset as we are about the violence that happened on December 14th, spree killing is only a small part of all gun deaths, as you know, in the country. Most of them are done by small handguns and I don't believe that those small handguns are on the table for banning. I don't think that's part of the discussion, so therefore, the problem is a -- a bigger problem than we're really discussing so far and requires a social and spiritual solution.

And this means that in your major cities we need to fund an alternative to the gang activity. If there isn't an alternative compassionate living, enlightened civics, positive activities for the youth then the gangs will be the only show in town. That is where most of the deaths from gun violence occur.

In West CONN there is a Center for Compassionate Living and I believe that our country needs to be spiritually awakened and that there is a certain social science curriculum which is common to all religions, the golden rule, love your neighbor as yourself, treat others the way that you want to be treated, how to make friends, how to resolve conflicts in a positive way, this is a body of education which we are lacking, not only here in Connecticut, but throughout the country.

And so if you really want to make an effective change, okay. You'll decide about my first remark about how well the experiment is going with the automatic and semi-automatic weapons, but the larger problem is going to require a larger solution and not a Band-Aid and that we need to invest in this type of curriculum, which is not religion, it's a social science, how to treat one another properly in our society.

It can be done. It should be done. It's worth every bit of money that we could throw at it. And I thank you for your time this evening.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: At -- at this time we are going

to move to residents of Newtown beginning with George Coleman and we're going to start using the side microphones. And as you can imagine, we have given deference to the family -- families of the victims, to the representatives of the Sandy Hook Elementary School community, to first responders and to clergy when it comes to time, but we do have 84 folks who are signed up; we would like to get to you all.

The school has been very gracious in hosting us here tonight, but they would like us to conclude by midnight, so I am going to ask that when you hear that buzzer if you haven't concluded your testimony -- when you hear that little buzzer go off, please wrap up as quickly as possible so that we can respect of all those folks who would like to testify, and we can hear as many of you as possible this evening.

Is George Coleman here?

If George Coleman is not here, Laurie Martinelli followed by Joyce Murty and Julia Wasserman.

LAURIE MARTINELLI: Hi. I'm Laurie Martinelli. I'm here to ask for your support in the necessary changes on gun laws in our state and our country. The time for change is now.

Children and teachers cannot be massacred in our schools. You must recognize the devastation that has forever been -- that has forever changed our town and schools. As a school employee my job and place of work has also been changed. I'm the one who holds the buzzer.

One of the statements that keeps surfacing is that this is an emotional response to what happened to Sandy Hook School. Well, it is emotional when children and educators are gunned down in schools. It's also emotional when people are gunned down in movie theaters and at the mall and at college.

What kind of people are we if this kind of thing that is happening in the United States of America and we are not emotional? This is not a video game. These are not just numbers.

These are people's lives and we cannot be okay with such a tragic event occurring in our cities, towns and states across the nation, so I urge you to think about those children and teachers and perhaps think of your loved ones, because at the risk of sounding cliché it can happen -- if it can happen in a wonderful, safe town like Newtown it can happen in any community.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Joyce Murty to be followed by Julia Wasserman.

JOYCE MURTY: Good evening. Thank you for listening to us tonight and coming into our town and allowing us to speak.

I first want to say I'm a mother. I'm a lawyer and I'm a resident of Sandy Hook, Connecticut and I implore you, we have to work through the rhetoric and vote to propose sensible and intelligent solutions.

There's no justification for assault weapons, or high capacity magazines, or limited background checks. Are we really willing to

sacrifice innocent children and people so that others have an unfettered right to shoot whatever weapon they choose?

Are the victims of Sandy Hook, Columbine, Aurora and the thousands of other Americans who are killed by guns in this country just collateral damage so that others can what, protect themselves multiple times over, kill animals? What is the moral, social and political justification for this?

We have to ask ourselves these questions. Please have the courage to do what's right. What's sensible? What is progressive? The path of allowing more and more guns into the social arena will not lead to a safer, more civilized society.

We must decide what type of a state we are, what kind of a country we are, what kind of a world we want our children to grow up in. We need to ask ourselves whether we want our children to grow up in a world with more guns or with fewer guns.

Do we have to look to Canada and Australia as examples of strong leadership and moral courage? Has America lost its place in the world? I hope not.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Julia Wasserman and then to be followed by Tom Maurath and Catherin Michaud.

JULIA WASSERMAN: Good evening, Mr. Chairman.

I'm going to cut my thing -- the things I meant to say this evening and say what I

believe is important. First of all, thank you for being here. The -- I very much appreciate the -- this committee's existence and that you have all come to heard -- to hear us.

My recommendations -- and by the way, Rabbi Praver said most of the things that I meant to say. I would like to make one recommendation to you that is that there be a permanent commission which include the staff of existing state agencies.

I'm saying that because I know there's no money in Hartford and you need to use existing resources. I'm talking DMHAS Education, Public Health, Public Safety, Program Review and Investigation's Committee -- well, are -- and members of the Standing Committees of Cognizance. You can also reach outside to places like Central Connecticut State University, which has the municipal studies division and so on.

Finally, the commission's mission would be to monitor federal strategies and to promote a better understanding of the social implications of violence in our culture. Let Connecticut be a leader.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Julia, it's -- it's nice to see you. Thank you for your previous service in the state legislature and it's great to see you here tonight.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: We miss you.

Tom Maurath to be followed by Catherine Michaud and then Richard Fenaroli.

TOM MAURATH: Thank you. Good morning -- or good afternoon my -- my name is Tom Maurath. My wife Daryl and I and my two children and over 10 immediate family members have called Newtown our home for 40 years.

I am here to say that the horrific strategy that happened in Sandy Hook can never ever be allowed to happen again. And really why I'm here today is not as much to testify, but to provide an observation on what happened in this testimony in Hartford on Monday.

First of all, most of the people that are on this board sat in chairs and for 16 and a half hours listened to testimony for over hundreds of people, for that, we thank you. The other part of the observation that I saw in Hartford was there were a very, very strong contingent and staunch opponents of any type of gun control.

What I witnessed was a contingent that was very well organized, very well versed in their interpretation of the Second Amendment, and a very resolute message that they will not accept any proposed gun control laws. It was literally the polar opposite of this evening.

In fairness every single testimonial that those people gave included a sincere and heartfelt condolence to the victims of the families. While nothing can bring those 20 beautiful children and their six rogue teachers back, we are now obligated as a society to make things right.

I am a gun owner, but this tragedy was a tipping point for me and it demands now the following legislation changes. It is time to ban all assault weapons and large capacity ammunition. It is time to require permits and universal back checks -- background checks, not on just the new sales for long rifles and guns, but on resale and transfers, and I believe it is very important to make gun lower -- gun owners liable for negligent storage -- storage if anyone gains access and commits a crime.

In order -- unfortunately, without a clear and decisive action it is not a question of if this happens again, it's when. And if we do not take change to change these -- make change to change these laws and to implement those laws, the complacency will the blame when this happens again in another community, so I ask this legislative committee with our unconditional support of your constituents, let's do the right thing. Let's have Newtown and Connecticut lead the way for this country to make it safer for our families and community.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Catherine Michaud. Is Catherine here? To be followed by Richard Fenaroli. Is Mr. Fenaroli here?

RICHARD FENAROLI: Yes.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Please proceed.

RICHARD FENAROLI: Thank you.

I'm Rich Fenaroli. I've been a resident of

Sandy Hook for 32 years. I would like to thank everyone for being here tonight. Thank you very much.

I would also like to be as gentle as I can with the feelings and the passion of the people here tonight. I'll tell you that I -- I feel for all of you and the pain and the sensitivity and the newness of this all. I -- I've got to voice something of a differing opinion and please be patient with me.

I would like to say that no gun pulls its own trigger and there were many laws that were already broken by the time that boy entered to that building. We are here now as citizens of this town --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Could you please -- excuse me -- if you could just please speak closer to the microphone so we can hear.

RICHARD FENAROLI: Thank you. I will.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

RICHARD FENAROLI: We are here as residents and -- of this -- of this state and this country asking these great Legislators to work on our behalf and I will remind us that the greatest danger that our country has of -- of violence is domestic violence.

And, Rabbi Praver, I greatly appreciate your preceding me because you're so gentle a soul. You really are a great person, a member of our community of Newtown, but I would also like to say that we could have participated -- I could have participated if I had known that that man was thinking about leaving his family. How

come he wasn't with his children? How come I didn't remind him? How come I wasn't there to tell him that if he leaves his family he's making our whole community weaker?

And if I knew that he left how come I wasn't there for his son to throw him -- show him how to throw a baseball and take him Boy Scouts and keep him out of trouble? And his mother, how could she feel so frightened that she accumulated guns. You know, where -- where was she going for that?

When my -- when I was a kid my mother had a sewing circle that 10 or 12 women would come to our house every couple of months or so, and they would be kibitzing about everything, and you could be sure that if any woman was having an issue with their family, or their fears, that not only would they be trying to address it themselves, they would have their husbands, and their sons, and their -- their children involved.

We all have a responsibility to participate in what went on here. I pass by that -- that Sandy Hook Elementary School three times that morning. One time exactly when it was happening and I still feel bad. How come I didn't feel it? If my children were in there I would have felt it. How -- how come? Did I not love enough? How come I didn't do something?

I -- I'll just like to respectfully remind everybody here that we're so grateful for you to be here and to be considering legislation on our behalf, but we've got the media that we have been buying -- we've been paying for this -- this entertainment and videos that we have.

I apologize for going a little bit longer and I just be -- ask for your patience just a little bit longer and -- and I -- I would just ask -- I will say -- just for what I believe something of change may happen. Something that Legislators could do and so I see President Obama is very influential with the media.

I think that we could have weekly network reminders to us to the importance of families and the importance that we stay together and what it does to a strong moral society and even locally, you know, this sounds like totally out of the box and I apologize again, but, you know, maybe we can have a two day a week moratorium on divorce say.

And if people can -- it may send a message, you know, two days you can get along for two more days. You can get divorced on the other three days, you know, so two days you can stick it out, you know. How about it? How about it?

I mean, this -- this sounds like so bizarre and I don't intend to be this way. Really, I just wanted to try to -- to make us think outside of -- of legislating ourselves even more.

I was interviewed at Saint Rose the Friday night that this happened from Poland, France and Japan and I said this is going to go to gun control, school security and mental illness, but there's something so much deeper going on and we have to recognize that there is a deep problem going on.

I don't know what a godless society resembles if 20 children don't tell us. God bless you all. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Patricia Sabato. Is Patricia Sabato here? To be followed by Chris Penrod, Bill Stevens, Michael Early.

PATRICIA SABATO: Good evening.

Thank you for letting me speak. My name is Patricia Sabato. I'm a mother of four. I'm an advocate certified under the Connecticut General Assembly. I live in the heart of Sandy Hook.

Within days after December 14th political leaders assured us that all will be done in order to prevent another tragedy and we can begin to transform our state; however, our town has been ripped apart in the aftermath. Legislation was quickly drafted and organized groups began emerging with alternative agendas.

This has occurred without critical facts and data being reviewed. Yesterday an important bill was introduced that will establish a task force to study the relationship between the use of psychotropic drugs, violent media and mass violence. Four newspapers, including the New York Times and the Associate Press, filed for a disclosure of the investigation documents that continued to remain sealed and marked privileged. Why?

We rely on the -- this critical information in order to effectively legislate in turn protecting our communities. The outreach from across the world has been overwhelming and we

are grateful. As we heal we are still left with many unanswered questions, one which may be a link between these drugs and mass violence. We must not rush the development of a quick solution, but to take a comprehensive look at the situation in its entirety.

With this strategy together we can all create new laws to ensure public safety. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Chris Penrod to be followed by Bill Stevens.

CHRIS PENROD: Good evening.

My name is Chris Penrod. I've been a resident of Newtown for about a year and a half, prior to that I lived in Sandy Hook about a block away from the school.

I've been a veteran of the United States Army for about nine years. I served as an infantry of men in Iraq for a year and a half and I served as a team leader for a sniper section for a year. I'm well versed in firearms. I've trained with many special forces over the years and I can tell you right now, 30-round, 10 round, 20 -- doesn't matter what size magazine you can do devastating amount of force with these weapons nowadays. It's all a matter of perception and it's a matter of exposure.

I believe fully with the prior veteran who is part of the 82nd Airborne that we do need mandatory background checks on all firearms that are going to be owned in this country, as well as mandatory checks on storage for the weapon as well as ammunition.

I believe in further training that needs to be

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given to firearm owners and perspective pistol permit holders who go out and buy a handgun after getting a pistol, putting it in their safe and praying that they don't need it, and when the day comes they don't know have a clue how to use it, because they haven't trained on it.

Those are the most dangerous people you're ever going to put in the -- in a home and putting them in a home with a come with a child who doesn't know about it and a parent who doesn't know how to secure it, they're not going to -- they're going to get a hold of that weapon and bad things are going to happen regardless.

My last point is, education and making our schools safe. I walked into this school without one sight of a metal detector or one officer asking me if I carried any deadly weapons. I don't -- I don't own any weapons.

I don't see the need to at this time, but that's been changing, especially with home invasions and the things that have been going on in this country, but the fact remains is I walked into this school a trained military individual with over 10 years and four years of combat for this country and not one person stopped and asked me if there was a threat that I could pose to the people in this -- in this building.

These are all people I live with. I care about them tremendously. My daughter is a student here and I enjoy seeing her go to school and come back every day knowing that she's safe and, unfortunately, I am the front line of defense when it comes to my home,

because I lived out in the backwoods of Newtown. Police aren't going to get there in time if something bad happens.

All these AR15s, which actually stands for armalite, not automatic rifle -- all these weapons are out there illegally, not just legally, I want to be able to protect my family with the same thing that an enemy can come to me bear in my home.
Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Chris, thank you for your service to our country as well.

Bill Stevens to be followed by Michael Early, Michelle Ku and Miranda Pacchiana.

BILL STEVENS: My name is Bill Stevens. I'm a Newtown resident, parent, veteran and a hunter. My fifth grade daughter was over at Reid Intermediate School tonight playing in the orchestra next to her classmate who is the big brother of a Sandy Hook victim.

As a dad I have no words. This task force is supposed to be about stopping gun violence. As a veteran I can tell you that no soldier wants to go to war. And as a parent I'm of course opposed to gun violence, but I'm also opposed to a false -- false sense of security at the expense of the rights enshrined in this document, the Constitution, the very foundation of our nation.

I once took an oath to uphold and defend this document, which preserves my rights, your rights, my freedoms and your freedoms. Whether you exercise those rights is an option. I could have stayed home tonight not

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exercise my right to free speech. Some of you maybe wish I had. My older kids didn't vote last fall. They said both candidates sucked. I couldn't argue with that, but they still had the right to vote.

From our history classes we're supposed to know that these rights are inalienable and endowed by our creator to all citizens regardless of your gender, race, religion or creed. In order to limit or expand those rights there is something called an amendment to the national or the state Constitution or due process in a court of law. You don't merely pass laws to take away or limit my rights unless I forfeit them by committing a crime and exercising to keep and -- exercising my right to keep and bear arms is not a crime.

It's my choice, my right as a husband and a father to be prepared, equipped and trained to protect my family, not out of fear, but out of my own -- my own sense of responsibility and to have the defense of my family and maybe my neighbors someday, dictated by those who would rather call 911 first. That's their right too.

I'm very saddened at what happened in Sandy Hook as a dad, as I said, but I'm also saddened as a veteran to have to be here speaking on home soil in defense of our fundamental rights as Americans. As neighbors -- as Newtown and as a nation we're better than that.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Michael Early to be followed by
Michelle Ku.

MICHAEL EARLY: Hello. I am Michael Early. I would like to agree with the last speaker. I would also like to say that I don't want people to not focus on the common denominator between every shooting that they've -- have been speaking about from Colorado to Aurora, Seattle, everywhere. The common denominator is mental health.

I'm former law enforcement. I've seen the other side of this. I understand what they're going through. My family we go out to every one of these, but I don't want them to -- everybody keeps pushing this issue of the Second Amendment gun. It is an amendment. It's not a privilege.

Driving a car or a hunting license is a privilege. That is not a right. There's red on that flag with all the blood of every man who stood there and said I agree to uphold this Constitution and that is what you are doing. They we're not just farmers 200 years ago. That was a miracle that that Constitution came about and let us not forget that, but the common denominator was mental health.

From the closing of Fairfield Hills in the '60s and '70s, which nobody wants to bring up back with the Kennedys that's where we have our problem. You have to do something about that. Yes, how he was able to get these weapons, he was a maniac. Anybody who would do this to children is a maniac and you have to remember that.

Yes, they do have to secured, but I was on the other end. I don't want to be on the other

end. It is a very bad feeling when someone has a weapon and they have more rounds than you and they're pulling the trigger and you're limited to how many rounds is in your weapon. That is not fair for any American. That's what our forefathers fought and died for and that's what a lot of men put their lives on the line and stood in front of this flag and said I am not -- I'm standing up. I'm on this wall protecting it and it's a shame that I have to be here tonight to defend the Second Amendment because that's what it comes down to.

Look into the mental health criteria. Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Michelle Ku. Is Michelle here?

Miranda Pacchiana to be followed by David Barzetti and Lee Shull.

MIRANDA PACCHIANA: Hi. I would like to thank you all for coming to our town tonight and I also think it's safe to say that we're all grateful to the parents and the first responders who spoke tonight with such purpose and eloquence despite their deep grief. We've all been very moved by their stories and they're our heroes.

I'm Miranda Pacchiana by the way. I live in Sandy Hook. My husband and I have been residents of Newtown for 20 years and our three children all attended Sandy Hook School.

I'm here today because I feel that it is my obligation as a mother and as a citizen of Newtown and Connecticut to urge you to pass the legislation proposed by Connecticut Against Gun Violence. I'm not going to go

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over it in detail because enough people have that done that, but I do want to say that as sales of high capacity weapons and ammunition have steadily increased, so have the mass shootings around the country.

Life has become vastly more violent since I went to school. It never occurred to me to be afraid of being murdered, but this is the world that my children are growing up in. The Constitutional rights of all citizens to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is being seriously infringed upon when we cannot send our children to school without fearing that they might be shot.

As for the mental health aspect, I earned my masters in social work about the same time that Fairfield Hills was one of many mental health housing institutions that was shut down around the country. Since that time we have not sufficiently replaced the services that once addressed the needs of the mentally ill. Whether or not they need to be separated from society.

We absolutely have to stop looking the other way while desperate and angry people grow more dangerous. We need to see changes that make mental healthcare easily available to every citizen and every concerned parent whose child exhibits signs of dangerous behavior. This includes in-patient facilities and not just prescription medications and brief counseling or oversight. A more comprehensive system must be put in place.

Please act on behalf of the best interest of all citizens and help us be an example to the rest of the country by passing this

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desperately needed legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: David Barzetti to be followed by Lee Shull.

DAVID BARZETTI: Hi. My name is David Barzetti. I'm a resident of Newtown. I have a 1-year old daughter and a 5-year old son. My 5-year old son Johnny played with Jesse Lewis last summer. He was a great kid. I met his mom, Jesse as well, good boy. Really sad to see what happened here.

I want to express my deepest sadness and loss of these families. I can't imagine what these people and these families are going through. I'm so sorry for all of you.

I completely understand why we are here today debating the issue of guns in the wake of this tragedy. We are divided into two groups. One that thinks if we keep people from owning guns we can stop another 12/14 from happening. The other group wants to protect ourselves from others like Adam Lanza.

The facts show that in places where gun control laws are passed they experienced higher rates of murder and violent crimes. In Chicago in 2012, 500 school-aged children aged five to 18 were murdered. Guns, pistols, rifles, whatever they used, many were obtained illegally.

People worrying about pushing gun control laws. Hand gun sales, and of course as you all know, permits, ammunition purchases have

been increasing at such a tremendous rate. The problem is most or all of our shootings happen in -- unfortunately in gun free zones, such as here in Newtown and in the theater as well. That's -- that's a big problem.

I better move on here. My brother and I we've been -- we were taught by my dad who grew up with guns. We're very comfortable with them. Obviously we don't need an assault rifle to kill a dear, but we also need -- we also don't need to take away a 500 horsepower car from vehicle -- from an owner who wants to own a high-powered vehicle. That's their choice.

You know, deaths in -- in automobiles are 43,000, guns are just 6,500. It's -- it -- people who are set on doing damage do not think like rational people. Adam Lanza was not a rational person. We all know that. He created this crime because he wanted to. It's difficult to stop a mentally disturbed individual like him, so we need to stop individuals like him, these criminals that are abusing the law. They're -- they're buying guns in any major city without abiding by the laws.

Unfortunately the law-abiding citizen hopefully he won't have to pay the price for the -- the damage that this individual did, so we need to stop the criminals and we need to stop these guys from getting guns and contributing to this kind of situation.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next is Lee Shull. After Lee -- and feel free to be prepared to walk right up to the mic -- are Joellen Lawson, Jim Hodson,

David Freedman, David Ackert.

LEE SHULL: My name is Lee Shull. I have lived in Sandy Hook for nine years. My grandparents lived and owned a business here in Newtown while I -- when I was growing up.

Both my children, (inaudible), attended Sandy Hook Elementary School, and my wife teaches sixth grade in town. She knew many of the educators killed and families of the children. Several of the victims, one of the survivors, as well as the shooter and his mother lived in my immediate neighborhood.

Two days after the shooting, after many discussions with friends and strangers, I sat down at my computer in the middle of the night and typed a message to my family, friends and neighbors. I knew that we had to respond to help the families, our community, and our nation. I needed -- we needed for this tragedy to lead to some real changes.

A new non-profit organization, Sandy Hook Promise, has grown out of the overwhelming response to my late night email and I'm honored to be here representing all of the volunteers who have come together to build Sandy Hook Promise. That first night I don't think I realized what a long process it would be to help our community and to bring about real change.

Today, though, it's clear that our response to what happened in our community will take many years and our responsibility for bringing change will be ongoing. I would encourage the commission to take this long view. Of course we want solutions and we want action, but

they're going to be any simple fixes. No legislative package alone no matter how well thought out or well -- how well intentioned will solve the problem.

I say this not to excuse an action. I say it rather to encourage us to recognize that much work will remain long after tonight's hearing and this year's legislative session has ended. Real solutions will require sustained comprehensive action by governments, communities and yes, by individuals.

Clearly, we have gaps in our mental health system that must be addressed. Of course it makes sense to take a fresh look at school security to be sure we're doing all we can and we need to have an ongoing discussion about gun responsibility. Our laws should constantly be reviewed to make sure that they meet our needs. Thoughtful consideration should not be a once in a lifetime occurrence sparked only by tragedy.

In looking at the longer term I encourage the commission to focus not just on causes of violence, but on the real impacts of violence. Sandy Hook Promise's first goal is to care for those impacted by the tragedy here in Newtown, the families who lost loved ones, the survivors, the first responders, the teachers and the others in the community who were affected, so many of our neighbors will need help long after Sandy Hook is out of the headlines.

How will our state meet this obligation to care for our own in this and other tragedies? In just a few short minutes the hearts of our town were broken. It will take much, much

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longer and it will take many years for us to address the causes and impacts of those fate -
- few fateful minutes.

Tonight is only the beginning of a long journey that we must make together. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next on the list is Joellen Lawson. If Joellen is not here we have Jim Hodson and then David Freedman after Jim and feel free when I call your names off -- I'll do it in about four or five at a time to come on up and -- and walk up to the microphone so we could try to move on quickly.

Thank you.

JIM HODSON: I'm Jim Hodson, father of two children from a Newtown School. Thank you all for your service tonight. I don't envy your position.

On December 14th we were all stunned by the piercing scream of evil. What followed was a worldwide outpouring of millions of whispers of humanity. The echoes of those screams have now entered this debate, but I implore you to listen for the whispers.

I would like to discuss a facet of this problem that seems to frequently be overlooked. This is a business problem. The right to bear arms might be the best marketing slogan ever devised. Let me be clear, I care not to tread on anybody's rights, nor to turn responsible gun owners into criminals. What I object to is the notion that I have to pay for the consequences when problems arise as a result of an industry lobby neutering gun protection laws so profits effectively trump

lives.

Throughout our community and across the country there have been calls for more protection, more firearms, more cost to you and I and more profits for the violence industry. This is analogous to the company upstream polluting your water and then being the only game in town to sell you fresh water.

It's obvious that with each improvement in the firearms sold a multiple of taxpayer funded sales follow to protect against them, be it body armor for our police, more powerful guns, or more security for our schools. It is a self-serving cycle benefiting well organized industries and yes, even adding Connecticut jobs.

Our new reality is so distorted that if we choose as a community not to pay for these we are sued for not protecting our children. This is not the freedom our founders had envisioned. Since we cannot unpolluted the water we need to take other action. We need to move upstream and encourage responsible firearm use through our markets.

As in any fair and free market in a capitalistic society we must require the seller to bear the full cost of their product, including the cost imposed on society by product of their designs. You and I must not pay for their pollution. True freedom does not impose the cost of individual choices on the rest of society and those hiding behind the Second Amendment for better profits are hypocritical of their patriotism.

So in addition to all of the other measures

which are worthy tonight that you're considering, I urge you to consider an approach that imposes the total cost of ownership on the firearms -- on firearms and those who profit from it.

Consideration should include -- I'll be finished in a second thank you -- all additional security added -- that the firearm industry fund all the additional security added to schools and institutions, the incremental protection gear required by our police, retroactive safety and controls that disable a firearm that are not being fired by their intended owner, an ongoing independent research needed to adjust our approaches bring transparency and a data driven discussion to the public.

Any country that can use free markets to create the interest, put a man in space, or map the entire genome is surely capable of creating a firearm that can only be shot by its intended law-abiding citizen. Legislation is never as powerful as the markets. Money is the only language that resonates -- resonates with those of hidden power and shrinking accountability.

The powerful are intimidating and loud, but it's your time. Dig deep, don't fear and let the whispers guide your decision. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next -- next is David Freedman, then David Ackert, then Jackie Avia and again, we want to make sure we hear from everybody and our time is limited.

Thank you.

DAVID FREEDMAN: Thank you. Thank you, everyone,
for being here.

My name is David Freedman. I'm a father of two from Newtown. I was shocked and horrified by the events that took place in Sandy Hook. Fortunately, my children were attending another school about two miles away when the event took place.

As with many, I was onsite at Sandy Hook Fire House watching families collect those children who survived and watching those parents who would never see their children again. It will forever be ingrained in my memory of what I observed and experienced that day.

I've never owned a gun, nor will I ever. I think I've probably shot a gun once in my life; however, I truly believe in the Second Amendment and the guarantees -- guarantees the right to bear and keep arms. Our Constitution is our guide and we should continue to believe in it.

This is very complicated in a complex area of discussion for everyone, including the lawmakers. We must find a way to bring all the parties together for a broader discussion which includes the gun companies, the lobbyists, and everyone. Our country was started on dialogue and the best way for all of us to come to a consensus is to bring everyone together. This is a difficult task, but it is doable.

First and foremost, background check needs to -- needs to be done and then implemented immediately. For someone who has run youth organizations for nearly two decades and have

had to have every single employee, have had every single person from the dishwasher all the way up to the fitness instructor to a camp counselor to have a background check. Why can't we have the gun owners have background checks?

Here is what I propose, background checks implemented immediately for all gun owners and anyone wanting to purchase guns. Create a team of professionals represented from mental health, gaming industry, the gun industry, including the NRA, NSSF, which is in our town, education professionals, and representatives from Newtown, Columbine, Aurora, Seattle, and all the other major places that had some tragedy, and people who have felt those tragedies to work as a team.

I'll just be a minute.

Ban assault weapons for personal use. Require a permit on all sales and transfers of guns and create a comprehensive database to track. Mandatory gun safety class with certification for all gun owners will require somebody to operate a canoe and a kayak to have a -- a boating certification.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: David?

DAVID FREEDMAN: Yes.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Can I just ask you to wrap up very quickly --

DAVID FREEDMAN: Yep -- yep.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: -- please.

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DAVID FREEDMAN: Okay. And lastly, like my tie says from Save the Children, that (inaudible) said, age 12, we must all work together. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next is David Ackert, then Jackie Villa, then Georgia Monaghan and if you just make sure that you please speak into the microphone.

Thank you.

DAVID ACKERT: Sure.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard.

My name is Dave Ackert. I live in Sandy Hook. I have a seven-year old son and a 13-year old daughter and I'm also the founder of the newly formed Newtown Action Alliance.

Over the past week a 100 of us on very short notice went to Washington, D.C. to march on the Capitol to demand legislative action to reduce gun violence in our streets -- in our streets, in our homes and our schools and in our modern society.

In the past 48 hours almost 200 have joined our Newtown based, grassroots organization to take action -- to demand action. It is on behalf of these people and the ones that will be joining us in the -- in the coming days that I say enough. We believe that reforms in the gun industry will make all of us safer. This includes universal background checks on all gun purchases, the elimination of high capacity magazines and armor piercing ammunition, and removing military grade weapons from civilian life.

Some of us are gun owners and we all oppose interfering with responsible gun ownership for sport, for hunting or to protect life and property; however, we recognize that other industries are well regulated to protect the public, but not guns.

Other industries throughout history have resisted rules to improve public safety; the auto industry, the tobacco industry, the drug industry and even the food industry lately.

Thankfully, they have all -- they all have been regulated to a certain degree. We now have seat belts, air bags and child seats, liability insurance requirements, limits on tobacco and drug marketing tactics, including being prohibited for marketing to children or giving samples to children and many of these industries whose products place a financial burden on society are taxed to help offset those costs.

Why doesn't any of this apply to the gun industry? The answer comes down to money. The gun industry only cares about their profits. In fact, the NRA -- I was surprised -- not surprised to learn, but disturbed that they actually earn a commission on every gun sale from some of the gun manufacturers. They literally get paid every time a gun is sold, so it's in their self-interest that they fund the political campaigns of so many lawmakers. Well, the eyes of the nation, of the world -- the whole world are on what our Connecticut lawmakers do -- what you guys are going to do. You need to be bold. You need to make statement and set an example for any of the lawmakers anywhere in our country whose

careers are funded by the gun lobby. The people of Newtown will not rest until together with a silent majority in Connecticut and the silent majority in our country, we neutralize the special interests to bring about reasonable regulations that require manufacturers of lethal products to acknowledge responsibly.

Please stand up to the self-serving gun lobby. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Jackie, thank you. You're up.

JACKIE VILLA: Thank you all for being here. Thank you for hearing us and I extend my condolences, heartfelt, to the families and I hope some of them are still here to listen to me tonight.

A mother bear protects her cubs with the lethal force of her powerful teeth and sharp claws. A mother deer protects her fawns with her massive, striking, strong hoofs. Even a domestic dog our beloved pet would use lethal force to protect her pups. I and millions of others mean to do you no harm with our Second Amendment right that the Constitution affords us to possess firearms.

Your loved one's right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was stripped away from them that day by one crazed animal, and yet, in your goal you look to strip millions of innocent law-abiding people's rights. That is so disproportionately wrong in so many ways.

It is ironic that I am here today to beg you not to take some of the very God given rights

from me that were so violently stripped from you and your loved ones. Our hope is to protect ourselves, our neighbors, the elderly and the disabled perhaps, and our indefensible young. That's the goal of everyone here.

Dawn Hochsprung used her flesh and blood to protect your children that day. I can't stop wondering if she wished she had had the equal lethal force so desperately necessary to protect her indefensible students that day.

I'm asking all of you here today, I'm asking all of the families on behalf of millions of people and young mothers across the United States, please take the time to try to understand, respect and preserve our Second Amendment right so that we may continue to possess the equal force necessary to protect those that are indefensible.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next on our list is Georgia Monaghan and after Georgia are Darren Wagner, Mary Burnham, Bill Hemby.

GEORGIA MONAGHAN: I live in Sandy Hook, Connecticut and I have one son in Newtown High School and one son who attends the middle school. I'm also a teacher.

I grew up in -- in Australia and lived there in 1996 when strict gun laws, including the banning of all semi-automatic weapons were introduced after 13 mass shootings in 18 years. Since 1996 there has not been one -- not one, mass incident in Australia and general gun deaths, including gun suicides, have been reduced by half since those strict laws were introduced.

So I know that gun control laws work in reducing gun related deaths. When it came time for my family to settle in the United States my first concern was gun violence in U.S. schools. Yes, that is the very first thing that entered my head when I was in position where I had to relocate to the United States.

I was well aware of Columbine and I knew that the U.S. had one of the high -- or the highest incidents of gun related deaths in the world. So I spent six months researching and looking for a town with the lowest crime rate possible and the best schools. I found that town to be Newtown, Connecticut.

I believed that here my children would be safe in an American school in this town and in this community and for five years that proved to be absolutely correct. I had found a quintessential New England town with a Norman Rockwell quality, a strong sense of community and a rich culture.

It felt like home immediately and we felt safe in this corner of America that is until that fateful day when we received an alert that all Newtown Schools were in lockdown due to a shooter in one of our schools. At that moment we did not know which school was in danger. You can only imagine how we felt.

After what seemed like an eternity we received news that the high school and middle school were currently safe. A rush of relief for our sons was mixed with the awful realization that a whole school of parents was not so lucky.

Then we received frantic text messages and email messages from my son at the high school,

who was watching the whole thing unfold on his tablet, telling us he was scared that a second shooter could possibly be coming to Newtown High, where we stand today, since it is only about a mile away from Sandy Hook Elementary School.

To read a text message from your son telling you who it -- he is in lockdown --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Georgia? Can I just ask you to quickly summarize, please?

GEORGIA MONAGHAN: Okay.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

GEORGIA MONAGHAN: Okay. My summary.

Connecticut Legislators lead the nation. If this could happen in the safest town in America it could happen anywhere. This is part of an epidemic of violence that is increasing in frequency. The worst mass incidents in U.S. history have occurred in the last six years. Time is of the essence.

Ban all semi-automatic weapons, including existing ones. Institute a buyback program and destroy all the guns that come in. Ban all ammunition magazines over seven rounds. Introduce strict universal background checks and 28-day waiting periods to purchase a gun.

Connecticut, the U.S. is at a crossroads and the nation's eyes are on us and you. Show America the way.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next on our list is Darren Wagner, followed by Mary Burnham and Bill

Hemby.

DARREN WAGNER: Hi. My name is Darren Wagner and I would like to thank you all for being in our community. That was actually my wife. She did the research that found this amazing town. Prior to us moving here I was a deputy sheriff in Ohio where gun violence is -- it's -- it was out of control. I did the best I could for 12 years.

I left the force because of post-traumatic stress disorder. I took on the guilt and the grief of every victim that I encountered. I -- I went to Australia and for 12 years I had a normal life. I returned back here and pretended to be something that I wasn't, just a photographer, whereas as a first responder I was still hurting, but since my wife had chosen the best place in the country I felt at ease.

Well, as she said on that morning in this high school our son cowered in the corner with his classmates looking out the window at the helicopters wondering if there was a second shooter. Now, there's been amazing points brought up. I know that we have a right to bear arms. I know what victims feel like when they are helpless -- domestic violence -- women that are scared. Dads who want to protect our families. I get it.

I fully understand that and we have a right to protect our families, but just because the bad guy has 800 rounds should we have 800 rounds and where does it stop? When I started as a law enforcement officer I had a revolver and then the bad guys had semi-automatics. Policemen were getting killed because the bad

guys had semi-automatics.

Well, my friends on the force died because of that and then I eventually got a semi-automatic, but where do we stop. Where do we absolutely -- you know, these guns do not protect houses. For 12 years not one call that I took was somebody protecting their family with a semi-automatic weapon. It didn't happen.

If you're unfamiliar with weapons, please go out to your firearms range. There are plenty of wonderful weapons to protect your house. I ask you to ban the semi-automatic weapons, the assault weapons, the background checks have to be instituted.

I thank you all very much.

MARY BURNHAM: Hi. My name is Mary Burnham. I've lived in Sandy Hook for almost 40 years. My children went through the public schools from Holly Elementary to graduating from high school. They also attended preschool here.

Many years ago I was a kindergarten teacher in the Westport Public Schools. For 19 years I was the director of a state funded center in New Milford, Connecticut, very similar to our Adventure Center in Sandy Hook. I cared very deeply about children's early years.

I'm very concerned that your focus and that your fixes will be for public school grades K-12. I fear you will forget about the early childhood community. I beg you do not leave these ages birth to five out of the fixes. Remember prevention saves lives and money and when you make these fixes fund them.

Mental health is a concern for everyone. Common sense prevention is far more effective than intervention. Start early. The first thousand days of a life are crucial to human's mental health. Mental health intervention is currently not available for many of our very young children; infants and toddlers.

For these children services must include families and at present time there are few clinicians who can assist with preverbal children. In Connecticut we have a number of strong outreach screening prevention in clinical mental health programs for the youngest; however, the need for services is far greater than the capacity, making it very difficult to access services.

I cannot tell you how many times as a director of an early childhood center I asked for help for a child who had behavioral problems and was asked, are these problems affecting their learning? Does he or she know their numbers, colors, letters? In early childhood letters and numbers are one area of learning, but social and emotional is probably the most important part of development that we take care of.

Connecticut early childhood programs should have available funded, trained and educated therapists. Additionally, pediatricians along with early childhood staff should be trained to recognize difficulties and assist families in assessing and accessing services. Insurance should cover mental health services and therapist must be encouraged to serve these children.

Common sense prevention at early ages can

avoid intervention at later ages. Prevention just might stop killings and suicides. Common sense parents and families must have access to mental health services. If needed every child and family in Connecticut from birth through adult should have access to mental health services regardless of a child's residence, small town, city, rural area, or it -- regardless of income, rich, poor, in between.

Again, prevention is far more cost effective. I encourage this working group to examine the availability and affordability of programs that assist families before mental health concerns reach the level where an individual harms him or herself or others.

We are focused now because of the tragedy on 12/14, but we must also remember the numbers of individuals who self-medicate or commit suicide, or those struggling with other mental health problems.

One again, I beg you to fund mental health for early childhood, including a birth to age five in your fixes. Thank you very much and I am more than willing to help on any kind of committee to help make this happen. I know it's an expensive one, but if we don't do something we're in deep trouble.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next is Bill Hemby. Is Bill here?

Next on the list -- I apologize your first name is not down, S. McGuiness-Getzinger, followed by Peter Muckell, followed by Andrew and Katherine Morosky.

SUSAN MCGUINESS-GETZINGER: Hi. Sorry for my back.

Thank you. My sincere condolences to the families and first responders. I understand loss.

Weak weapon laws help kill people through lack of deterrents. This is a weapon. We have very weak texting laws in Connecticut. My husband was killed in a car accident on the Merit Parkway on Good Friday. This might have been part of a crime. It's under investigation.

You have to look at this weapon, as well as any other weapons you look at, and I think you all have them and I think they're not regulated, and I think they're more dangerous than the number of gun deaths, because car accidents top that.

My love of my life, the best man -- obviously a big man in many ways, my children are without. There are three kids in the Newtown school system that were on lockdown, including a four-year old pre-K, who did not get services in this -- this district because I discovered after three and a half years of complete Hell that ended the night before he was killed -- biblical stuff folks, pay attention.

He was killed the night after I had a hearing in this high school, in a room down the hall, exposing the alleged corruption in your Connecticut Department of Ed. Legal Affairs Division and Special Ed Division and the -- the top administrators in this school district -- the top three, with the help of the law firm of Berchem, Moses and Devlin, who also worked with Shipman and Goodman, who Chris

Murphy's dad is a partner of, and all partners are supposed to take care of everything the other lawyers are doing, but that's not happening.

You have peer review for medical and judges and lawyers and it's BS and kids are dying because of your bad rules.

Okay. Let me get to my bullet points. Peanuts and popcorn, Gandhi and the sting -- the sting is the corruption just like Paul Newman only maybe not as attractive. You want into a PPT or educational hearing they're all in on it. The staff is told not to identify. They can't pay their mortgage if they speak out against it. It's wrong. Fix it.

Dead kids, that's the price. Got it? No time. Now, Gandhi, civil -- peaceful, civil disobedience. He went because the -- the British Rule taxed salt. Okay. He went to the ocean to get his salt. Civil disobedience. This is school choice week. I just gave Debbie Ludline the bill for my kids' education because I had to take them out last year because people told me they're going to call Child Protective Services on you. You're speaking against the district -- and I'm almost done.

Peanuts and popcorn -- peanuts, popcorn, my son can't eat them. You know why? Because the undisclosed adjuvants and ingredients and vaccines that my own pediatrician didn't know on September 27th of this year, I had to tell him what they were. Adjuvant 65-4 is peanut oil. How many kids do you know are allergic to peanuts today? They cross react with nuts and the mercury gets in the brains.

The boys have two X chromosomes. They can't flush it out of their system. Check the hair. It'll tell you if the mercury is getting out. Most boys can't get it out. You know what that leads to? Learning disabilities, dyslexia, mental health problems.

Then instead of taking care of them and giving them services, we drug them with psychotropic drugs that the Colonel's popcorn -- remember? Colonel's pop, Virginia Tech, Newtown, those are only the first Colonel's.

We got one-fourth of them in schools on psychotropic drugs. These are children. They shouldn't be on this. They shouldn't be on this at all. Check all the conflicts of interests, the disclosures on all the people who have stock in big pharma.

Thank you very much. Gandhi, school choice, peanuts and popcorn, crap in the vaccines and the popcorn are the kids in the microwave. They're about to pop. They're all on drugs.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

SUSAN MCGUINESS-GETZINGER: No child left behind, all children are getting left behind and 20 kids and adults and you know what, Adam Lanza was the first victim because he probably had medical problems and the attorney's seal the records.

Do you know --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Ma'am? Thank --

SUSAN MCGUINESS-GETZINGER: -- that the attorney's

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-- excuse me, my last point -- the attorneys can keep the records for the school district. They're agents of the school.

Berchem, Moses and Devlin do not -- do not qualify as decent lawyers. I proved it. It's public information.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Ma'am, thank you.

SUSAN MCGUINNESS-GETZINGER: Four, five, 12, this school. Thank you.

PETER MUCKELL: Hi. My name is Pete Muckell. I have two daughters here in town going to the - the public schools.

Thanks for sticking around this late because I'm sure this isn't that easy.

I'm a bow hunter and a fisherman. I've -- I love being outside. I always have. I just want -- I can assure you guys that no true sportsman uses a semi-automatic weapon. It just doesn't happen. That's right. Yeah, just wait your turn.

I'm not here to argue with gun owners. I think, you know, we all saw what happened in Sandy Hook, and frankly, there's nothing I can say that'll ever change anybody's opinion. I think frankly you're on one side of the debate or the other. You know, it's really going to come down to you guys to really, you know, just try to do the best you can and pick a side.

I wish there was more middle ground. I would think of all the issues when you talked about, you know, protecting our children, I would

imagine this would be just the simplest thing you could ever imagine and with the amount of debate and just the, you know, sort of the -- the facts being a little bit more convoluted, you know, frankly it almost makes me worry about our ability to govern at all.

Imagine the really, really, you know, difficult issues. This one just seems like it comes with a bow on it. We all know what has to get done. The -- it's these assault rifles and they're just going to have to get banned. I would also say that these -- these clips about the 10 rounds, you know, it worries that, you know, that just seems a little high to me and I'm a hunter. You know, 10 rounds -- what I see -- would I be half as sad if -- if Lanza went in there with -- with 10 bullets and not how many -- however many.

It just seems like too many. And I really -- one of the other gentlemen (sic) came over here before and was saying just to be bold and I really would encourage that. Really be bold and I know the gun industry is -- is powerful -- or perceived to be powerful, but I also want to remind everybody that, you know, at one time the tobacco industry was just in, you know, invincible and now they're just so marginalized.

The stuff that they -- that they came up and railed against just never happened. You know, they were -- everybody was saying that when we -- if we would ban smoking in restaurants people -- you know, restaurants would go out of business. Frankly, they've never been more enjoyable.

So just -- just keep that in mind and -- and

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again, just be really bold -- really bold and I think we're really, really counting on you guys to do something meaningful.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next on the list I have Andrew and Katherine Morosky. After that Jim Knapp, Bob Neff, Po Murray.

ANDREW MOROSKY: Good evening. Thank you all for coming here to Newtown. I appreciate the time you guys put in the other night. I was watching some of the testimony from Hartford and that was a very long night for all of you. Thank you for coming here and sharing in our grief and hearing us.

This is a picture of my two daughters. They -
- I have a six-year old and a nine-year old. They go to the Holly School which is about a mile and a half from Sandy Hook.

My -- my six-year old played soccer in the Newtown Soccer Club and two of her teammates this past year were Caroline Previdi and Catherine Hubbard, and that's my daughter right there. It's -- it's pretty tough to explain to a six-year old that, you know, she's not going to see Caroline, her friend from dance school, too, again.

It's -- I -- I didn't know how I was going to do it and we -- we got through it, but not a fun thing and then, you know, a couple of weeks after the massacre she had a nightmare about a gunman coming into her school chasing her and her classmates and killing 12 of her classmates, but she was okay. You know, that -- she was very happy that she was okay and,

you know, but, you know, these are the things that we're dealing with as parents of, you know, outside Sandy Hook.

So it's -- it goes way beyond, you know, I -- I -- my heart really goes out to the Sandy Hook community, but we're all affected by this.

I just wanted to, you know, make a view other observations with respect to just the violence in America. There is such an epidemic of violence and I really -- if anything comes out of this, can we reduce the violence in this country. My wife is a teacher in Wilton School system.

Three weeks before Sandy Hook one of her students was pulled out of assembly because earlier that morning after she had gone to school her parents got in a fight and they shot each other. The father, I believe, critically injured and -- and the mother was -- was okay, but she, you know, was part of the shooting.

And then one week before Sandy Hook the music teacher at Wilton High School was shot and killed at home. And to have these things just keep happening one after another it's -- other people brought up other industries that have been held accountable for their products and I don't see that happening to the gun industry. It's -- it's a real problem when, you know, nothing happens time after time.

And I just wanted to say just a couple more things. With the respect to the Second Amendment I did -- I did some research on this, some -- you know, there has been some scholarship on the Second Amendment. It was

written by the founding fathers, yes. Several of the founding fathers, as you know, were slave owners and a lot of -- there's -- there's 300 slaves were owned by, I believe George Mason.

They had a vested interest in being able to raise a militia in the event of an insurrection. That is one of the compelling reasons that the Second Amendment was written and I fully am in support of the Second Amendment. I don't want to take guns away from responsible gun owners, but I don't think we need these assault weapons, high -- high-count magazine clips, et cetera.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

I have Jim Knapp and then I think it's -- can't read the writing -- Ben Neff and then Po Murray.

JIM KNAPP: Hi, I'm Jim Knapp. I'm a lifelong resident of Sandy Hook.

Thank you, everyone, for this opportunity to speak here tonight. I wish the circumstances that led up to this hearing were better and my heart goes out to all who have been affected by this senseless tragedy.

I attended Sandy Hook Elementary School, as did my children after me. I live close by between here and the school. I've worked for many years as a teacher and at least 20 years in high tech industry in both engineering and administrative positions.

My family has been in Newtown for at least four generations. I have guns that have been passed down for more generations than that and

some I have collected myself. I expect to pass that heritage down to my children and my grandchildren and it is my right.

Unfortunately when a madness strikes no amount of laws can prevent what has happened. I understand approximately 20 laws were broken during this crime. None of them saved anyone. I will not speak of this madness since our media has sensationalized this whole episode and made him a household word.

We now have so many gun laws here in Connecticut that my head spins when I try and keep up with them. I've basically given up. More gun laws will only make criminals out of many patriotic, law-abiding citizens who responsibly own guns now. Why should we be punished?

I have trained in Switzerland where everyone has a mandatory year of military service and each person keeps an assault rifle ready to go in their home. They have no crime -- none. We now live in a world where these things will happen and whether it's perpetrated by a madman or a terrorist we have to stop hiding behind our lily-white daffodil fantasy and realize that there are people in places in the world that are not very nice.

A quick trip through some of our rundown urban areas should be enough to remind you. We now have to look at things that will realistically work for us to protect our children. Enforce the gun laws that are already on the books. Adding more won't solve anything. If I wanted to commit a mass murder I could just as easily drive a hijacked tractor-trailer through the side of the school, or across the crowded

playground. Do we sue the truck manufacturer then?

I cannot justify arming teachers. One misplaced purse or unlocked desk could lead to an accident. Giving certain administrators access to a firearm locked -- safely locked up with proper training might help. Where I teach at Pomperaug High School we have five retired police officers as unarmed guards and one full-time armed police officer assigned to the school. This has worked out quite nicely and the guards have developed a great relationship with the faculty and our student body.

This was in place before our tragedy --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Jim --

JIM KNAPP: -- here in Sandy Hook.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: -- Jim, could I just ask you to quickly summarize, please?

JIM KNAPP: I'm almost done.

Over one-third of the schools in the U.S. have adopted some sort of security. What sort of outcome would we have had if there was an armed guard wearing a bulletproof vest at the door when this murderer arrived? We have to take security measures that involve personnel and we don't have to turn the school into a fortress, but at -- at least let's make it some deterrents instead of sheep in a pen waiting for the coyote to come.

In closing, I would like to say that pursuing my hunting and sport shooting hobbies has become more and more difficult in this area,

but it is my right and that's a right that our forefathers fought and died for and many good people I know would do the same.

Thank you.

RYAN KNAPP: I think I'm next. I'm not sure if that was my name.

I would -- I would like to first respond --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Could you just state your name for the record?

RYAN KNAPP: Ryan Knapp.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

RYAN KNAPP: I would like to --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: You were next, we just had the wrong first name.

RYAN KNAPP: I would like to first respond to an earlier point someone made. I did attend a funeral of my best friend's sister and he's now in the process of obtaining his pistol permit so that he can defend himself and others during a situation like the four minutes the murderer went uncontested at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

I'm a Sandy Hook Elementary alum, Sandy Hook resident and concerned constituent. When President Obama came to this school he promised an all-encompassing approach to future mass murderers. Firearms legislation attempts to address the how the murders occurred, but the bigger concern should be the why in this scenario.

Blaming firearms is a superficial and ineffective way of dealing the fear -- of dealing with the fear that we are all collectively feeling through reactionary legislation. Even in a hypothetical situation where all firearms are removed from existence, these deranged people would still be out there with the same issues left to find other ways for their impulses to manifest; arsons, bombings, poisonings, et cetera.

What should be most telling is the fact that this happened just over a mile from Fairfield Hills, a former state mental hospital that had programs to treat the likes of the Sandy Hook murderer. The state cut funding to this hospital and closed it. This was the type of hospital where the murderer could have gotten 24-hour supervision and treatment.

In a story in the Newtown Bee that ran in October of 2012, a former Fairfield Hills employee, and resident -- registered nurse discussed the adolescent unit and what happened to the patients who were removed from its care. I would like to read a bit of it.

"A lot of young people were there for depression or because they were trying to hurt themselves, she said. She considers the adolescent program to have been highly successful. I still see some of my patients around and they're doing well now, she said. Closing Fairfield Hills State Hospital was the grand idea of the state. Some became homeless, she said, others turned to crime or became violent and ended up at Garner Prison. Why did it have to be all or nothing? Why did it have to be closed?"

Again, this is the type of program that the Sandy Hook murderer should have been in, but the state cut it. Federal privacy laws protected the shooter from being institutionalized against his wishes. That means that his mother could have carried him on her insurance until he was 26, but had no say in the treatment he was receiving.

I don't believe any children are born evil or that there is one defining event that makes them such, but rather a combination of events over time that leads to a corruption of values and reason. I think we are setting our children up to have problems. Texting causes children to have lack of personal skills. Social media has all but eliminated privacy.

I'll skip that stuff.

Anyway, we as a society don't want to face these issues. These are the harder questions to ask. All right. For example, if you polled all the parents of students who graduated with the murderer in Sandy Hook, how many of them would say, yes, my son or daughter teased and ridiculed him, ignored and excluded him, right here in this school? No one in town would admit to that, none, but I guarantee you it is statistically higher than no one.

These murders -- these murderers target those who are helpless to defend themselves. It's a power trip where cowards prey on the weak and innocent. That's why they usually take their own lives when met with the first semblance of resistance, but rather than identify and address the mentally ill individuals who are

already amongst us, you want to curtail the rights of citizens and turn them into potential victims. All right. By restricting their rights to defend themselves, that's called enabling.

I'm terrified of the mentally ill among us who go untreated and plot to carry out future mass murders. Rather than address how to find and treat those people we seem determined to take away our means of defending each other from said mass murderers.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Can I just ask you to wrap up please?

RYAN KNAPP: All right.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

RYAN KNAPP: All right. I hope this has some impact on your future legislative decisions. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Next is -- hold -- hold on one second, Po. After Po Murray is Shelly Northrop, Gina Wolfman and Barbara Manville.

PO MURRAY: Okay. Good evening.

Thank you for coming to Newtown and doing this critical work for our town, our state and for our country. Hopefully you get some sleep after tonight.

I am here to testify as a mother of four children. They all graduated from Sandy Hook Elementary School. I have lived in Sandy Hook for 13 years, in a wonderful neighborhood.

Regrettably, the shooter's home is in my neighborhood, about 200 yards away through the woods.

We lost our neighbors, our friends of friends, our teachers, and our principal on that dreadful day. My heart is broken. Since December 14th I have not been able to stop thinking about the 26 lives lost and their families. My Facebook friends could tell that I'm -- I am obsessed. I spend my days and nights reading everything I can about gun violence and gun control and I've learned a few things.

First, it's a complex problem and it's going to require a comprehensive solutions to deal with this. Second, almost 8,000 people have been shot so far in January. That's unacceptable. Third, according to the recent John Hopkins National Survey, a sizable 89 percent of all respondents and 75 percent of those identified as NRA members support universal background checks for gun sales.

About 70 percent of respondents supported bans on military style semi-automatic weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines. And I attended your session on Monday and I'm here tonight. I have not heard a single person say that they were against the Second Amendment.

Okay. These polls demonstrate that guns owners and non-gun owners are very much aligned in their support for strengthening the gun laws. I believe there is a great divide though. It exists between the gun lobby, the politician who fear a downgrade in their ratings, and with the sensible gun owners and the people of this nation who don't have an amendment to be protected from gun violence.

The gun lobby and the politicians are not the only ones culpable for the epidemic of gun violence in this country. I feel I am just a culpable. I have failed to take any type of action after witnessing Columbine, Virginia Tech, Tucson, Aurora and other mass shootings. I have never sent a letter, an email, or made a phone call to our Representatives in the past. My inaction has allowed the gun lobby to continue with gun proliferation.

I have not paid any attention to which politicians cater to them. I've had to change that because I'm heartbroken. Inaction is unacceptable. On Monday I heard many moms testify -- testify that they will become a single voter -- single-issue voter. We will be paying attention now.

After doing nonstop research since that dreadful day and talking to the people who have been fighting for gun control for a decade or longer I support the following measures. I would like the -- I would like a ban on military style semi-automatic assault weapons. I would like the high capacity magazines to be limited to seven, just like New York and please establish a DMV for guns, universal background checks for all gun sales are necessary.

There should be a national registry for all guns sold and we must limit and track ammunition sales. You have a unique opportunity to show Newtown, our state, our nation and the world that you act by listening to the people more than the gun proliferation lobby. Please honor the 26 lives lost and have empathy for the families in our community

hac/gbr BIPARTISAN TASK FORCE ON
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION &
CHILDRENS SAFETY

6:00 P.M.

by passing the most substantial sensible laws
and lead this nation in an effort to change
the culture of violence.

Please do not let Sandy Hook be remembered for
the tragedy, but the change that became of it.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Po.

PO MURRAY: Thank you so much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Shelley Northrop --

SHELLEY NORTHROP: Yes.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: -- Gina Wolfman, then Barbara
Manville.

SHELLEY NORTHROP: Hi, my name is Shelley Northrop.
I've lived in Sandy Hook for over 15 years and
both my children went to Sandy Hook
Elementary. My daughter is now at Newtown.
My son graduated from Newtown two years ago.

Like everyone in our town, we are mourning the
loss of those who died, including our friend
and neighbor, a beautiful woman who died
trying to protect the children in her care.
I've never been an activist or spoken out for
gun control. I've actually never spoken out
for anything before, but I am now.

Let me start out by saying I do not advocate
taking away anyone's Second Amendment right to
own guns, but we can and should regulate the
ownership of guns and adopt reasonable
restrictions.

We need to require universal background checks
on all sale of guns -- sales and transfers of
guns. We need to require a registration of

handguns with an annual renewal. We keep track of who owns cars. We can and should keep track of who owns guns.

Renew and tighten the assault weapons ban. Ban large capacity ammunition magazines of more than seven rounds, just like New York. We need to make gun owners liable for negligent storage, so if anyone gains access to guns and injures another person or causes property damage that negligence would be a felony offense.

I'm a kind of a common sense kind of person and I think these are all reasonable, common sense approaches to help improve the safety our community. It's really complex and no solution is going to be perfect, though we can't let that paralyze us into keeping the status quo. Now is the time for us to act. I urge your support for these measures.

Please do something now. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Gina Wolfman. Is Gina here?

A VOICE: (Inaudible).

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

Barbara Manville. Josh Harper. Actually the next three are Josh Harper, Nick Harper and Sylvia Harper. Are any of the Harpers here?

David Stowe.

DAVID STOWE: Hi, my name is David Stowe and before I start I want to thank you for coming here. I want to thank you for your compassion, your patience and I do not envy the task before

you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: If you could adjust the microphone there so we can hear you, that would be great. Thank you.

DAVID STOWE: I've never been on stage. Sorry. Should I just go to that one?

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Sure.

DAVID STOWE: Before I start remarks, I want to just take issue with something one of the gentlemen said before, the only common thread that I have ever seen in any active gun violence is a gun.

I am -- as I said, my name is David Stowe and I'm a Newtown resident and a father of two beautiful school aged girls, ages four and eight.

The specter of gun violence is all too real to me. On December 14th when this horrific tragedy unfolded there was a period of time when I did not know if my daughter was safe, in danger or worse. My relief in knowing that my girls were safe immediately turned to feelings of guilt and overwhelming sadness that many were not so -- that many were not as lucky.

From that moment I promised that I would do everything in my power to fight for change. Change that ensures that my girls would grow up -- grow up safe and that no other community would ever have to endure this horrible experience.

We have an absolute responsibility to do everything that we can to prevent another

tragedy like the one that took place at Sandy Hook and like the ones that unfold on the streets of our cities on a daily basis. Gun violence has been ignored for far too long. Partly because it is not usually as shocking as 20 beautiful children being struck down at one time, but more importantly because in reality it is about money, special interests and commerce.

Look at any poll and you will see that the majority and in most cases the overwhelming majority of people support universal background checks on both gun and ammunition purchases, eliminating high capacity magazines and a real assault weapons ban. It is long past time that our legislatures represented the people that elected them and not the will of the NRA and other special interest groups.

A silent majority who supports strong gun laws has been awakened by the tragedy in Sandy Hook. We will no longer be silent and no longer tolerate our government bowing to the loud, well-financed minority. We will hold you responsible and accountable at the ballot box and you will now have to be concerned about doing the right thing, as opposed to the easy thing.

I continuously hear the argument -- I continuously hear the argument that any regulation will only affect and punish law-abiding citizens, since criminals do not obey the law. This reasoning would then follow that we should have no laws at all. At any one -- at any time at most -- I'm sorry -- at any time almost every gun obtained was through legal means and then it was filtered down to the criminals hands.

This simple fact screams out that we must do a better job of controlling who can purchase guns and ammunition. We must do a better job of having background check system that incorporates felons, domestic abusers, violent offenders and certain mental illnesses, and we must eliminate the unchecked private sales and transfers that take place with no checks or documentation. And we must do everything that we can to eliminate straw purchasers.

For these reasons I fully support and recommend that you adopt the legislative proposal set forth by Connecticut Against Gun Violence. Enact a new legislation to cut -- curb gun violence and make our state a safer place. It's not going to by itself solve this problem. We will have to take significant steps to help improve our mental health system, as well as taking a hard look at our values as a society that help to perpetuate this cycle of violence. (04:00:08)

That said, to not pass legislation because it will not solve everything is both absurd and irresponsible. I ask you, as Gabby Giffords asked Congress today, be bold. Be courageous. We are counting on you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Adam Pacchiana. Is Adam Pacchiana here? Pacchiana, excuse me.

Top -- then Thomas Klucik, Elda Smith, and could I also ask you if you haven't spoken yet could you look at your remarks and see if you can conform them to that three minute limitation. We will be able to accommodate more speakers if folks can hold to that three minutes and when you hear that buzzer please conclude your remarks as quickly as possible.

Please proceed.

ADAM PACCHIANA: Thank you for coming to hear us -- all of us speak. It encourages me to see you working together to do what is right, even if on the national level things remain stagnant and partisan. I'm also encouraged by our neighbors in New York that had the courage to pass many progressive laws in response to the tragedies that we have endured.

My family has lived in Newtown for 20 years and Sandy Hook for the past 10. All three of my children went to Sandy Hook Elementary School where we have fond memories of top notch teachers and administrators. I'm here to make a simple point about a complex set of issues and that is what we have in place today is not working and something needs to be done. We need change.

There has been a steady decline in regulation over recent decades regarding mental healthcare, guns, and exposure to violence that have converged to create a dangerous and untenable environment for the most precious part of our society, our children.

In the shootings at Columbine -- I'm sorry -- if the shootings at Columbine, Virginia Tech, Aurora, Sandy Hook are not enough evidence that we need change I would hope the six shootings at our nation's schools and colleges, or the 1,421 deaths from gun violence that have occurred since December 14th, 2012, would force our lawmakers to look at the dysfunctional lack of rules that do not serve or protect our citizens.

Excuse me.

We must have meaningful dialogue and we must have change. All parties expressed their concerns, but the loudest does not get to dominate the conversation any more. Every day we wait, more citizens die. It is time for change.

Thank you again.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thomas Klucik. Is Thomas here?

Elda Smith. Frank Corigliano. If Frank here? Then Kevin Fitzgerald. If call your name please come down and take a seat close to the microphone. Jennifer Killin and Patricia Harrity.

Frank?

FRANK CORIGLIANO: Good evening.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Good evening.

FRANK CORIGLIANO: Thanks for being here tonight.

I'm a Newtown resident. We've been residents here for 11 years. I have seven children, two currently in Middle Gate Elementary School in Newtown.

December 14th was a trying day for my family. My wife called us -- or called me, I'm sorry, and expressed that there was lockdown in the Newtown schools and was very upset. I told her, don't worry, that we had had lockdowns before, it was probably nothing, as sure many of my fellow residents thought until we heard the news that there was a shooting in a

school, at which time she called and she was hysterical and I said, well, don't worry it -- it's probably the high school, unfortunately that's what we thought, because shootings are usually in high schools.

Unfortunately it was not, and for probably about 15 minutes we -- we had our own terror. Our whole community was affected on December 14th and devastated and is -- is still today it's -- it's something that doesn't go away.

My -- my family has been affected by gun violence before. In 1981 my brother was brutally murdered; however, that being said, as a student of history and with a deep love for my country, I value my Second Amendment and all of our Second Amendment rights.

The British passed the Intolerable Acts, as you will remember. The Stamp Act the -- the tax on tea, et cetera. That did not cause the American Revolution. What caused the revolution was the British going and taking away the guns of the colonists and then quartering soldiers. They responded with the Revolutionary War.

The Second Amendment was passed and the Second Amendment is -- is in effect not for hunters and not for pleasure shooting or -- or game or target shooting. It's to protect ourselves against the tyranny of our own government. That is why I -- I stand here and I support the Second Amendment and I know many of my fellow citizens disagree and -- and God knows I -- I understand their reasoning as -- as well.

Now, we're asking you as legislatures to do the legislative tour is to do something and

I'm asking as well. Reasonable background checks obviously should be in place. Background checks for mental health. They -- they should be no brainers. Banning assault weapons, well, a true assault weapon is a machine gun. They've been banned since 1934.

We're talking about semi-automatic weapons here and that -- that is what I'm hearing tonight that they magazines and the semi-automatic weapons seems to be what the constituents and at least in this auditorium are -- are pressing for and I -- I just don't support those two restrictions on -- on the Second Amendment rights. I -- I think they probably will be deemed to be unconstitutional as -- as they have in the past and -- and --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: If -- if you could conclude.

FRANK CORIGLIANO: I -- I'm concluding now, thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Great.

FRANK CORIGLIANO: Well, I -- I was wrapping it up. So that's -- that's all I have to say, but thank you for listening.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Kevin Fitzgerald.

KEVIN FITZGERALD: Hi, my name is Kevin Fitzgerald and my children Hannah and Kwin (phonetic) attend the Newtown school system.

Because of the allotted time for my testimony is limited I'll leave the arguments over gun bans and background checks, et cetera to the

others this evening so I can try to make a point -- or a recommendation for accountability.

To help me understand why gun supporters work so hard to defend their rights to bear arms, a colleague at work who is an avid gun collector suggested that I imagine if half the people of the country wanted to take away my car, something he knows I depend on every day. Now, I had trouble imagining any reasonable argument someone would -- could make that would force me to give up my car in a way that would serve the community as a whole.

Imagine, he said, that because there are so many car accidents, deaths and injuries, cars reviewed as deadly weapons and therefore should be banned. Well, he made his point. I came away from that discussion with the realization that the idea of regulating, limiting and even outright banning guns came to me a lot easier simply because I do not share his enthusiasm for guns and his rights under the Second Amendment.

Other than when I carried a side arm while serving in the Navy, I never had any reason to want a gun. And so I've given this issue more thought and I would like to suggest a different approach to this issue for the Assembly to consider. Using that same analogy of guns and cars it is interesting that in fact guns and cars are responsible for almost the same amount of deaths in the United States every year, somewhere between 30,000 and 35,000.

In fact, since this hearing began on average 15 people have been killed at the end of a gun. I read that the Center of Disease

Control estimates gun deaths may in fact surpass motor vehicle deaths for the first time in 2015. Now, for me to own a car there are laws that require that I have a title and that I register my car and renew that registration regularly.

For me to drive a car I have to pass a driving test to demonstrate my competency. If my eyesight suffers I may lose the right to operate that car forever. The law also requires that I have my inspected regularly to ensure it does not pollute and to make it remains in a safe condition so I do not harm myself or others.

In fact, right outside this auditorium I'm reminded by signs everywhere that dictate how I must operate my vehicle on the roads. I can't go over 65 miles per hour on the highway and I'm not allowed to do more than 25 miles an hour on Queen Street.

So guns and cars, two very different items, one or both considered very important to many of us. Yet, in my opinion only one of these things is properly and responsibly regulated and unfortunately the one that is regulated is not the one which was manufactured so that when you operate it properly someone will die.

Last month a gun manufactured to kill people performed exactly as intended inside Sandy Hook Elementary School. That wasn't like a car accident where someone mistakenly drove off the road. That was a gun doing the job it was manufactured to do. So gun supporter or not, my suggestion to this Assembly is for accountability.

To operate my car I have to carry sufficient liability insurance to provide financial protection should my car end up in an accident. I can't drive here today without that insurance. Carrying insurance makes me accountable at least to some degree should I cause an accident with my car that results in injury or death of another person.

So why not a similar insurance on guns? Now, I don't believe there's a single gun owner in this room who intends to be any less careful with their gun than I am with my car, but like the 30,000 plus motor vehicle deaths that inevitably will happen this year, there will also be 30,000 plus deaths at the end of a gun regardless of how careful we all plan to be.

And by the way I do agree that cars do not kill people their drivers do and that's why the law requires those drivers to carry insurance, even if they never hurt anyone else in their life, so why should it not require that shooters carry insurance too.

So I ask you, the Connecticut General Assembly, if guns are made for the sole purpose of killing people, shouldn't gun owners do at least as much to be accountable for themselves and their guns as the state of Connecticut requires that I do with my car?

Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Is Jennifer Killin here?

JENNIFER KILLIN: Yep.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: To be followed by Patricia Harrity and Ray Gallagher.

JENNIFER KILLIN: Good evening. I would like to thank the task force members for traveling all the way to Newtown and allowing us the opportunity to speak. It means so much to us that you are here.

My name is Jennifer Killin. I'm a mom of two first graders in the Newtown Public School system. I was going to leave this out, but I want to begin by saying that the gun lobby is telling their constituents that we all want to repeal the Second Amendment, and that is a bald-faced lie. The NSF has been emailing that to their constituents.

We are not here to repeal the Second Amendment and I don't know how many more times we are going to have to say this. I'm tired of it. I'm tired of talking about the Second Amendment.

The Supreme Court says that it is constitutional to place restrictions on gun ownership. The NRA throughout most of its history said that it was constitutional to place restrictions on gun ownership, so I do not understand why we're talking about the Second Amendment.

I urge gun owners to please listen to what we are saying instead of jumping to erroneous conclusions about our intent. Our intent is to reduce gun violence while respecting our citizens rights to defend their homes and families. It is in everyone's best interest to work together.

Regarding this right for defense, while I support it I do not understand why we need lethal force to protect ourselves. Why we are

not aggressively pursuing research into effective non-lethal methods of self-defense, even against home invasions with multiple assailants.

The NRA's claim that the only thing that stops a bad guy with a good -- with a gun is a good guy with a gun is naïve and utterly at odds with reality. Even NYPD officers when involved in gunfights hit their target only 18 percent of the time, which means that 82 percent of the time their bullets something or someone else.

It is woefully unrealistic to expect a normal person, even a trained person, to react calmly and rationally in a life-threatening situation, but today gun owners have 18th century rights and responsibilities with 21st century firepower. I believe that most gun owners are responsible, but I am not willing to bet my children's life on the claim of one stranger, much less millions -- millions.

I do not know if banning particular types of weapons will work though there is evidence that the previous assault weapons ban was working in major cities throughout the U.S. when it expired. What I do strongly believe, like the gentleman before me, is in accountability -- oh, Jesus -- of manufacturers, retailers and owners of these guns for all the reasons previously stated, registrations, insurance, et cetera.

People that did not demonstrate responsible gun ownership should have their privileges revoked. End of story. These are reasonable. Gun manufacturers to be responsible -- sorry - - the gun lobby likes to talk about how

placing restrictions on gun ownership will impact the Connecticut economy by eliminating jobs, but all the manufacturers need to do is adapt. Force them to ship their focus to gun safety for products and non-lethal ammunition.

I will never support armed staff at school. I will move my children to private school if that ever happens. As Colin Goddard who is the survivor of Virginia Tech, he took four bullets, said -- I'm paraphrasing -- you cannot tell an elementary teacher that it is easier to stand up to a shooter than it is to stand up to a lobbyist with a checkbook.

My final suggestion is to look at existing gun control laws that work, such as those in Japan, Australia, Britain, and Canada. And Britain children are almost never killed by guns and they play the same video games that our children play here. They watch the same -

SENATOR WILLIAMS: If you could --

JENNIFER KILLIN: -- movies.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: -- if you could please, please just conclude.

JENNIFER KILLIN: Yes, I'm sorry.

Perhaps we could take that approach with weapons that are not appropriate in most situations, such as assault weapons. If a person wishes to purchase an assault weapon he must submit an application. If he lives and works in an area where gang violence is common or works with criminals or ex-cons or is disabled, perhaps those might be grounds for

allowing possession of such a weapon, or large capacity bullets -- magazines.

Another approach would be to require the assault weapons do not leave the home. We are -- the world is watching Connecticut. We hold responsibility for thousands --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Ms. --

JENNIFER KILLIN: -- of lives across the U.S. If we do not act swiftly and decisively and comprehensively we condemn untold numbers to the same fate that be failed Columbine, Aurora, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook and now Albuquerque, which is my previous home town and which now -- some -- I've lived in two places that have now had mass shootings.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Killin.

You -- you know, let me just say that and I -- I think I can speak for my colleagues here that we've just been so tremendously fortunate to -- to hear these extraordinary stories, but also tremendous and very thoughtful and very helpful testimony from you all here tonight and especially you who have waited so patiently to speak.

So -- so when I -- when I say, you know, could you please try and conform those comments as closely as possible to three minutes and conclude when you hear that buzzer, it's because I and my colleagues want to hear more of you. We want to hear as many of you as possible and still honor our commitment as far

as the school and allowing them to get this place in order by midnight.

So -- so it's -- we -- we are so fortunate to get your input and your testimony here tonight and again, we all want to hear from as many of you as possible.

Patricia Harrity. Ray Gallagher. Brad Paynter to be followed by Ken Swain, Lisa Schwartz, Brian O'Connor, Noelle D'Agostino.

Could you please identify yourself?

BRAD PAYNTER: Yes, I'm Brad Paynter.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

BRAD PAYNTER: Yeah, thanks a lot for coming.

Everything I wanted to say has really been said, so I'll just highlight it. I thought Chris Penrod, the idea -- the nine year Army veteran with mandatory registration, training and education, I mean, that's a no brainer. And Chief Fuchs from Redding, ban those mega mags, the assault rifle ban. Those are all really what has to happen.

The one thing I really didn't hear, except from one person, and it was just an aside, was there has to be a buy back. It can't be a line in the sand going forward. It has to be, you know, a one year, you know, -- what do you call it -- grace period for you to come forward with your assault weapon, or your big mag and, you know, have the state buy it back. I mean, you know, New York did a great thing, but they just dumped their problem on the other 49 states and that's not really what we

should be doing.

We should be leading the nation. We should be taking care of our own business and that's it. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Ken Swain.

KEN SWAIN: Yes. I want to thank you all for -- for being here and spending all the long hours that you've been spending and will continue to spend and your dedication to these issues. It's certainly not a simple problem.

My name is Ken Swain. I've lived in Sandy Hook for 35 years. At least three of the slain children shared the same school bus that was once my children's school bus. There's no one in Newtown that was not untouched by this tragedy.

A tragedy that I believe was entirely preventable under the 1994 assault weapons ban that was deplorably allowed to expire in 2004. Somehow we have become the -- the political pawns of special interest groups, the gun industry, the NRA, the NSSF, who is a mile away from here and we need to protect our children and our populace.

Some weapons should only be in the hands of the trained military or law enforcement, not the general public. The AR15 platform weapons as used in the Sandy Hook massacre were indeed designed as military weapons. The significant difference between the law enforcement civilian version and the military version is the -- its rate of fire. You have incredibly

fast or extremely fast.

The ammo is the same. The ammo, as described by four star General McChrystal, is designed to be in his words particularly devastating to the human body and should not be in civilian hands. When he was asked what should be done the general replied and I quote, "We need to take a very mature look at that. We have to look at legislation."

Mayors and police chiefs across the United States agree stronger decisive measures are needed. They're tired of being outgunned. I would hope that you would all revisit Chief Kehoe's remarks here today. He had brung (sic) strong views on what should be done. I -- I applaud everything that he said and you need to pay attention to it as well.

The nation is being bullied by the NRA and the NSSF, what I call patheteric insistence that our founding fathers actually wanted us all to be armed with military style weapons, so that we could defend ourselves at home, at the mall, at the theater and at school. The availability of weapons like this only empowers those that should have not -- should not have them and -- and would not react unless they were empowered by those weapons.

The NRA's ridiculous stance that we have no choice but to arm ourselves against the bad guys is ridiculous. When I was 12 I might have agreed to go after the bad guys with my Daisy bb gun, but I've grown up. Twenty-six and seven-year olds -- 26 (inaudible) seven-year old children from this town will never grow up because the AR15 military style weapon was again deemed legal.

It occurred to me tonight listening, let me point out Adam Lanza apparently was very familiar with his bushmaster rifle, so he was trained. He apparently -- you don't learn to do this in your backyard, so he apparently had access to a range. The ranges are all NRA certified, I believe, or they're certainly members of the NRA, as are the instructors.

NRA certified instructors are training children to use these rifles. The NRA is a -- should be accountable for this as well. They are responsible.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: If you could please conclude.

KEN SWAIN: I'll conclude.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks.

KEN SWAIN: Our founding fathers must be appalled by our modern ability to confound the simple statement of the Second Amendment. The words well-regulated militia are lost in the gun frenzy. The NRA abuses the Second Amendment. Poorly regulate firearms have become a threat in everyday American life. That's why we're here.

Sorry -- lost my place -- there is no other way to say it, but guns are out of control. That certainly is not what the founding fathers wanted. I'm personally alarmed at how many on Monday -- how many people stood up and said that they were ready to shoot to kill the bad guys. You spent hours listening to that rhetoric. It's alarming. And how many were ready to stand up with their AR15s against the government.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. I -- I think -- I think we need to conclude. I'm sorry.

KEN SWAIN: You need to move us off of the chess board. You need to -- I think you know what it is that needs to be done. You need to just do it. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Swain.

Lisa Schwartz.

LISA SCHWARTZ: Yes, good evening. Thank you.

My name is Lisa Schwartz and I've lived in Newtown for 20 years. Initially I was reluctant to speak tonight because I didn't lose a loved one at Sandy Hook School, nor did I know any of the victims personally and yet, like everyone in this room and probably all of you on that stage, I've cried every day since December 14th and I can't not speak.

First, to our General Assembly, I want to clearly state what I'm asking you to consider and secondly, I would like all of us to reflect on the philosophical and moral significance of this decision.

To our legislative delegation, please consider these five requests, and I apologize but I did enumerate. One, please ban the manufacture, sale and use of semi-automatic guns. Two, please implement a reasonable buy back system for all semi-automatic guns currently in circulation in the state of Connecticut.

Three, please restrict large capacity ammunition magazines to no more than seven

rounds. Four, please implement a similar and reasonable buy back system for high capacity magazines currently in circulation which exceed the seven round limit.

And five, please -- please require mandatory background checks on the sale and transfer of all guns, including those sold at gun shows, through private sale and via online transaction.

For some these requests will seem like common sense solutions. For others they will be perceived as a breach of fundamental rights. I know that. I understand it. I've heard it and I do respect these diverging opinions, but still I must speak. Unlike some political issues these decisions are not about appealing -- appeasing lobbyist or placating voters. These are value judgments.

We teach our children that all actions have consequences. That in essence we are all the sum of our choices. The same holds true here. What we do will reflect who we are as a society. We can choose to take no action because we're unwilling to debate our differences or consent to compromise. We can choose to act out of fear or distrust. We can limit the scope of our action, but one thing is certain, what we teach our children is what matters.

We are the sum of our choices. Please do the right thing. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Brian O'Connor to be followed by Noelle D'Agostino, Mike Audet, Olga Williams and if any of those folks are here if you could please come down and be ready to speak

that would be great.

Thanks.

BRIAN O'CONNOR: Good evening. It's good to be able to speak here tonight and I thank all of you for being here. I know it's been a long night. It can't be comfortable up there.

I'm glad that we could all come together and discuss things. Everybody here is here because they care about this so our differences -- there are differences, but we can all agree that we're trying to reach the same goal here and it's just great that everyone has been cordial.

I lived in town here nine years with my wife and two young children, you know, so we were like a lot of parents in this town that almost felt -- we did feel guilty that our -- we still have our children, and then we actually felt guilty for even feeling guilty because just imagining what the -- what the victim's families were going through.

You know, I think we have a lot of problems in this country. We do have a problem with gun violence. It's really a problem with violence. The gun just makes it easier for bad people to hurt more people in a given period of time.

We have a lot of other problems too. We have a moral decay. We have a spiritual decay. We have a media that wants to make these individuals very, very famous, so that gives them an incentive to not only take their life, but to go out and spread their pain to others and become famous, probably part of the reason

why they dress up like military and use these
-- these weapons.

A lot of other weapons just as deadly out
there, but this one looks -- the AR15 looks
like a military weapon. That might be a sign
there. I really don't want to talk about guns
too much. I just want to point a few things
out.

Between Virginia Tech and this shooting the
deadliest mass shooting occurred in
Binghamton, New York in 2009 at an immigration
center. Those were handguns. In addition,
New York State had a 10 round magazine
capacity ban, so that's a five year period.

We also want to look at when the Gun Free Zone
Act was passed in the mid-1990s the shooting
at school -- at schools have gone through the
roof and it's pretty easy to understand that
these shooters are cowards and they're going
to go where they know folks aren't armed. You
go to prison for a long time getting caught
with a gun on school grounds, so they know
that most likely reasonable people and
responsible people will leave their guns at
home.

And I know it sounds insane to arm teachers.
I'm not -- I'm not for that, but I don't -- at
the same time I don't think we should deny the
right if a teacher does want to carry at
school.

BRIAN O'CONNOR: They're responsible people. They
actually do it in quite a few states. They've
been doing it for a while and I don't see
anybody getting hurt. Utah is one state you
might want to check out.

You know, another thing too, when we talk about like Britain and Australia. It's probably not that many massacres there because we don't hand out mood altering drugs like candy to young men.

It's probably part of the reason there, but really the most important thing to remember going forward -- and it's unfortunate that it takes these types of tragedies to create an environment where people start to respect each other again -- just remember to love your neighbor.

If you have a -- you might a -- a neighbor that might turn into one of these individual madmen, I mean, if you love your neighbor and you get involved with your neighbors -- you don't want to be nosey, but just get to know your neighbors and just care about them. Just be -- just be genuine people. A lot of this could be avoided.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Noelle D'Agostino to be followed by Mike Audet.

NOELLE D'AGOSTINO: Thank you.

I'm a Newtown resident and a parent of a four-year old boy. And I thank the Commission for the time and effort you're putting into these issues. These are three ideas I would like to support tonight.

First, I support the measures being proposed by Connecticut Against Gun Violence. These

measures are necessary if we hope to make meaningful progress toward reducing the terrible impact of gun related injury and death that has brought us to this point.

Second, it is my hope that this Commission will articulate clear measurable goals by which progress can be judged over the coming years. In the end we're not just interested in steps and laws, we're interested in measurable and meaningful results. Among those results should be the sharp decline in gun related death and injury of all kinds, criminal and accidental, across the state.

Even before this tragedy gun violence levels in Connecticut were many multiples of the national averages of other modern industrialized nations. We should state a goal of being on par with or below those norms.

Finally, we should recognize that the actions we take this spring may not be sufficient to fully eradicate this problem and achieve those measures of success we set for our state. I would like the Commission to promise that an ongoing effort will be established by the legislature to continue working on this issue until the goals you set are achieved.

This should include an annual report and press conference discussing the levels of gun related death and injury across the state, our progress in reducing those tragedies and additional measures as needed until our goals are achieved.

Thank you for your consideration.

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CHILDRENS SAFETY

6:00 P.M.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Mike Audet. Is Mike Audet here?

Olga Williams. Please -- please come forward.

Oh, I'm sorry. Is Olga Williams here?

Paul Ludanyi.

MAE SCHMIDLE: For some strange reason I'm not on your list.

I -- I never thought that I would live to see the day that the legislature stayed overnight in Newtown, but I think it's wonderful and you're awful close to staying overnight.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Mae, could you just introduce yourself?

MAE SCHMIDLE: I must tell you that I really, really appreciate the hours --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Please -- please -- if just -- please identify yourself for the record.

MAE SCHMIDLE: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Mae Schmidle and I'm a long time Newtown resident, and I'm here to speak about schools, and I am the director of the Children's Adventure Center, which is a preschool, which hasn't been addressed hardly with anything here this evening.

But I did want to say that our school, which is called the Children's Adventure School -- Children's Adventure Center, is essentially on the same property where Sandy Hook School is located, so when the eruption started at Sandy Hook School we felt it as much as anybody, and perhaps even more, because a lot of the children that go to Sandy Hook School go to

our preschool first, so they were all our friends. They were all our people that we enjoyed. They were the parents that we loved and it was a very, very difficult situation for us.

But the thing that I essentially want to address is safety measures -- or security measures in relation to the schools. Now, we talked a hundred reasons why what happened happened and -- and who made it happen, or who didn't make it happen, but I think one of the things the legislature should be thinking about is security in our schools and providing the very best that we can or the measures that would enable us then to -- to ring a bell, to do whatever we need to do to get the attention if we happen to have a problem in our school. I'm talking about any school at this particular time.

I know that school security should apply to all schools, not just the elementary or the high schools. It should also apply to preschools. Preschools are the ones that take the children from three to four years old and it's as important there as it anywhere else. School security might be an easier problem to handle than some of the big weighty problems that you have, but with school security you also need a little bit of money.

So I think that perhaps when you think about the big picture you might also think about things that we could do immediately this year, perhaps September or something like that. One of the things that we were questioned about when the security came to us right after the -- while during the Sandy Hook lockdown, they wanted to know if we had video cameras and

they said, oh, my God that would have been such a big help to us. Well, we didn't have video cameras, and I assume a lot of schools don't, but that would be an awfully good thing to have.

The silent alarm button is another thing that teachers can have on their desks, under their desks, or wherever. They wouldn't have to go for their phones or anything else, but a silent alarm button could alarm and it could go to the police -- would let people know what's going on and of course the -- the bullet proof glass windows are also important as you know for many things that happen. Gated main entries to schools; in many schools you open the front door and there you are and in today's world maybe we need to provide a little bit more protection when you open that front door -- if you're allowed to open it.

And of course all schools should have some kind of security at the front door, but for the people that think they're a little smarter than the security systems I think it's important to have an extra step before you get in the school. And then of course --

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Mae, can I ask you to wrap up real quick?

MAE SCHMIDLE: -- there are the pendants that teachers could wear pendants which would allow them immediately to notify somebody that something was wrong -- police or whatever.

So I urge you to look at security problems within our school as you look at the whole big picture, but the immediate picture for us in a lot of our schools, especially our preschools,

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which on their way -- our little kids, you know, they're three to five years old, they're on their way to kindergarten to other schools and we should be offering them the same security that we're offering the larger -- the bigger kids.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mae.

Next on the list is Frank Viola. Is Frank here?

After Frank is Mary-Barrett Anders. Next is Michael Majeski.

And if I -- if I just could -- we have the room until midnight. Based on the number of people we have left to -- who have signed up we won't have enough time. So we really want to hear from you, but if you could be as efficient as possible with your words we would really appreciate it.

Thank you.

MICHAEL MAJESKI: Thank you.

My name is Michael Majeski. My family is here in Newtown three and a half years. It's way past my bedtime thanks to many of my neighbors who didn't respect your allotment. I'm sure it's past some of yours.

Frankly, unlike many here, I'm very disheartened by -- and I would caution against any rush to add more laws and more regulations. I see it as a knee jerk reaction to a killer who broke many existing laws in

order to commit his heinous crimes. Any proposals that I've heard about being bandied about and I'm sure are in front of you being considered seem to me to be targeted at the symptoms of the issues and none would have done anything to stop or prevent what happened on December 14th.

If there is any common sense or wisdom amongst the members of this committee I would humbly ask that you focus more attention on the underlying cause of these murders and not the symptoms. The painful irony of a state mental hospital right up the street from here being closed because it was no longer needed is not lost on many of us in Newtown.

That closing was the direct result of past legislative policy. It is one of hundreds across the country that met a similar fate. President John F. Kennedy started the ball rolling in 1960 with what became the policy of mainstreaming -- the mainstreaming of mentally unstable people into our communities. Legislators and the experts in the psychology professions during the past several decades aided and abetted this push, whose main objective would seem to me to be based on politically correctness for its own sake.

There are consequences to policy. A fundamental question of why these crimes did not occur 50 years ago I have not heard asked very much. Let alone have I heard much in the way of a reasoned answer. I would humbly submit that the first and foremost it was because the severely mentally unstable back then were in places such as Fairfield State Hospital where they needed to be.

Until you and everyone in the political classes and the media acknowledge and accept responsibility for the failure of mainstreaming as a policy, I submit that you are merely tilting at windmills with new legislation or regulation and are wasting our tax dollars.

The reason there is little in the way of resources for the mentally ill is because you closed the institutions and provided us a system where politically correctness towards the mentally ill was placed above the consideration of the risks they pose in our communities.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Mike, thank you.

MICHAEL MAJESKI: I request that you publicly acknowledge this failure of policy before you push through any action in haste. Your policy decisions will have consequences just like the policy of mainstreaming has.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Mike --

MICHAEL MAJESKI: Please consider the long run impact of these decisions in front of you, so a rush to act in the short run doesn't lead you into making similar mistakes.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Mike, thank you very much.

MICHAEL MAJESKI: Thank you for providing this forum and I hope it will genuinely be constructive.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Next -- next is Eric Poupon. After Eric is Toni Earnshaw, Andrew Wold, Steve Reilly.

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ERIC POUPON: Hi everybody. I'm Eric Poupon. I have -- I'm a father of three here in Newtown and I wanted to thank you all for coming, especially Mitch, Dan and Deborah, representing our community.

I wanted to talk to you about a situation that's happening today, which is my family -- my neighborhood and several other neighborhoods in town repeatedly every week have to go through daily hours of shooting that go on, on private land near us.

After complaining about this with our neighbors, what we realized is that we have no rights to actually stop any of this shooting, and the inevitable happened on January 6th this year where somebody working on a roof on a neighbor's house actually got hit with a bullet.

Now, we went to the police again and we went to our local leaders again, but again, we have no rights to do anything. Now, the message from them is pretty clear. They are trying to heal. They don't have the capacity to really do and go against the type of organizations that are here to enact local legislation, so I am here to ask you and to know that you will making an immediate impact with enacting the legislation that's before you and you will be making our town safer. You will also be giving the police and our local leaders the ability to make changes and act in these situations.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Is Toni Earnshaw here?

If Toni's not, next is Andrew Wold, Steve Reilly, Kate Forno.

ANDREW WOLD: My name is Andrew Wold. I'm a Newtown resident. Like all of you I was horrified at what happened at the Sandy Hook School. Words can't express the sorrow I feel for those who lost loved ones that day.

Since that terrible day all of us are struggling about what to do in the aftermath. A conversation has started about criminal violence specifically, criminal gun violence. Certainly we have a problem with this, criminal gun violence. The operative word here is criminal and criminals do not obey the law. Since they do not obey the law passing more laws by definition cannot help.

We have plenty of laws on the books. I am holding here a book that enumerates every state and local gun law in the country. It is a 500-page book printed in small type. Let me say it again, we have enough gun laws. The problem is not guns, it's the criminals who use them. Guns are tools that can be used for good or for evil.

I would like to remind everyone here that the United States of America would not exist if it wasn't for military grade rifles in the hands of brave civilian patriots who sacrifice their time, treasure and in many cases their lives so we could live free from tyranny.

Those patriots were armed with the exact same types of rifles that the soldiers of the

tyrant carried. Things might have turned out much differently if those brave civilians had not been armed with rifles comparable to the ones their enemies used.

We live in the greatest country on earth thanks to military rifles in the hands of civilians. One of the good citizens who spoke here tonight is from Russia. He spoke eloquently and from the heart, but I would remind him and all of us that the Soviet dictators Lenin and Stalin disarmed their own people before they slaughtered tens of millions of their own people.

Here is some things Stalin had to say about guns, "If the opposition disarms well and good. If it refuses to disarm we shall disarm it ourselves. The only real power comes out of a long rifle. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. We don't let them have ideas, why would we let them have guns?"

It should go without saying that Stalin did not share these ideas with his people before he disarmed them. It should also go without saying that Stalin had aircraft, artillery and bombs at his disposal, but he still knew the danger that free citizens armed with rifles represented to a tyrant like him.

The criminal who committed these crimes in Sandy Hook was a troubled young man with mental health problems. In fact there's been an epidemic of violence in the last decade or so by young people between the ages of 15 and 25. Many of these young people were on legally prescribed psychotropic pharmaceutical meds. These prescription drugs have known

published side effects that include violent, deranged behavior, especially young people of this under 25 age group and the key word in that sentence is behavior.

We need to stay focused on violent human behavior because no amount of new gun laws will prevent violent behavior.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Andrew, can I ask you to wrap up?

ANDREW WOLD: A few more words please. I've waited a long time.

This is a terrifically and emotional time for all of us. Please don't focus on creating new laws that only affect law-abiding citizens. Criminals will never obey the law, instead please think about our teenagers and young adults who have mental problems. How can we help them? How can we prevent them from becoming the kind of young person that committed those horrible crimes in December 14th?

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Steve -- Steve Reilly. After Steve is Kate Forno, Heidi Carlin, Eliza Hoffman.

STEVE REILLY: Hi. My name is Steve Reilly. I'm a Newtown resident for nearly 17 years. This is a great community with terrific schools and wonderful people. I'm the father of five children, three elementary school age at a separate elementary school.

I would like to see the emphasis of your efforts from these discussions to focus on responsible gun ownership. Responsible gun ownership includes the ideas discussed here already, background checks prior to gun purchase, tightening regulations and aftermarket sales.

No single idea prevents another tragedy from happening. Ideas proposed by many can help build a plan to reduce the chances of another tragedy occurring again. Here is my idea. It's my understanding that when an individual gun is fired it makes a distinguishable imprint on the bullet similar to a fingerprint. The bullet can be connected to the gun that fired it. We should consider housing this information in a national database.

Before a gun is sold in the U.S. one shot should be fired. The bullet can be required to be sent to a central agency for ballistic testing and recording to connect the bullet with the gun sold. We can then track bullets found at a crime scene to the gun that fired it and to the original gun owner.

I feel this idea fosters responsible gun ownership in the following ways. The purchaser is less likely to attempt murder knowing the gun bullet connection exists. Two, the gun -- the owner will likely better protect and safely store the firearm from us by others knowing that the gun bullet connection exists.

Three, the original gun owner will want to remove themselves from this responsibility at the time of the sale of the gun knowing that

the gun bullet ship -- bullet connection exists.

I came here tonight to help me be the best parent to my children that I can be. I chose to speak tonight to try to help all the kids in our community feel safer and be safer. I chose to offer an idea for your consideration to be part of a bigger solution to help all of our nation's children be safer, for all of us to be safer.

On a separate note my heart goes out to the families who are directly impacted by this tragedy. God bless the teachers in our community and in the nation. God bless the first responders in our community and our nation.

Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Kate Forno. Is Kate here?

Heidi Carlin. Eliza Hoffman. I'm going to get this last name wrong probably, Lisa Chalou. Jane Cottinger -- or Cottingham. Wendy Hayes. Joan Charash. Barbara Myers.

I was getting worried there, Barbara. Thank you.

WENDY HAYES. Good evening. I don't like speaking in public so I hope I'm not too nervous.

Thank you all for coming here. I know it's a long evening.

I would like to basically speak about three points, the first one mental health. I come from a somewhat different perspective. My

daughter Emily had Adam in her chemistry class, so I do remember her speaking of him and his behavior and he wasn't a raving lunatic at that time, he was just an extremely paranoid social -- socially paranoid child.

I have no idea what happened to him in his later life, but I question -- I worry -- I bring more questions -- I guess I am nervous. I have more questions than actual offerings. I -- I wonder what was available to his family. What was available for them for him? I know she -- he was in my daughter's chemistry class and she would need to sit with him the entire time in class, so he needed to be supervised 24 hours a day and I just -- I don't know, but I wonder what was available for (inaudible).

I know we're mentioning Fairfield Hills. I understand Southbury Training School also used to take children. He was very gifted, so he wasn't -- you know, he was very brilliant. My daughter would talk how in chemistry class he would just look down, and the kids were warned, you know, don't make direct contact. He's very afraid of noise; be very quiet, but he would answer questions, you know, so it was a special situation. I don't think mainstreaming is the answer for (inaudible), you know.

My other point really I think this really isn't about gun. I don't think laws will pass this. I think other people have mentioned -- I think we really need to look -- you can't do this with laws, but I think we really need to look at the family, the community -- there's isolationism. I never was an advocate of violent videos games.

This is kind of -- I've lived in -- born in Fairfield County my entire life. I've live in Newtown 25. My children have gone through the system. These kids that are now like 25 are sort of the first generation that have either gone to daycare from the time they were infants all the way through. I know psychologists are even studying this. I don't mean to pass judgment, but they are studying this generation that it's a much more aggressive generation.

I question the psychologists have also been looking how they're being desensitized. And the last one is gun laws. I was on campus at Virginia Tech so when this happened it's a little -- maybe that's why I'm so shaky. I do know students after that. A lot of them discussed carrying weapons themselves because if someone was in that -- of course they're adults, I realize these were very young children, but it could have just, you know, eliminated what the carnage that took place.

So --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Wendy.

WENDY HAYES: -- a high-powered gun is a car, is just as dangerous as a gun.

So thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Barbara, welcome.

BARBARA MYERS: Yes, I'm Barbara.

Hello, everyone.

Well, I've got a lot written here, but I'm going to -- I'll shorten it. First, I would just like to thank you so much for coming here and sitting here. It's -- it's a really -- I know you already had a long day on Monday and I only have a 10 minute drive home and I can't imagine what your drive home will be like so I -- I just want to make sure you understand that everyone in this audience appreciates your time and commitment to this.

I've been a Newton resident for 31 years. My husband and I raise two kids here and I was also a Connecticut teacher for 36 years. I worked with Dawn Hochsprung and her dear, dear husband George in the Danbury schools.

I'm just basically your average, quiet, reliable taxpayer who never speaks out, but I don't know, I just felt like I had to speak out because I'm pretty shaken up. I actually grew up with guns. I -- my dad was a military guy and we used to go out target shooting and I loved to shoot guns when I was a kid, even though I was a girl and still am.

But, you know, we didn't have assault weapons back then. We had rifles and my dad had a pistol and it was really kind of fun, but it's like a different world now. Those days are long gone. So I want to urge you to make some real meaningful change and it is your duty to protect us. I -- I'm really relying on you to protect -- to protect our kids and to protect me as well.

So I urge to insist on background checks for all gun purchases. I'm a responsible citizen. I wouldn't mind if you wanted to check my

background, in fact, I would welcome it. Federal and state registration of all guns because after all guns do cross state lines. Sharing of information among law enforcement agencies, I know that's been mentioned. Banning of assault weapons and all military style weapons, ammunition and high capacity magazines -- was that for me?

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Yes.

BARBARA MYERS: Okay.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

BARBARA MYERS: I'm sorry. I'll -- I'll quit.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you very much.

BARBARA MYERS: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: People have been thinking that's a cell phone all night. That's -- now I -- now I get it. We're -- we're used to that bell going off in Hartford so.

Next on the list is Susan Boritz -- Boritz, Jan Brooks, Karen Pierce.

Okay. We'll wait for you.

Let -- I'll go over the next couple of names and then Senator Williams will take over. Karen Pierce, Daniel Kormanik, Cathy Robinson, Mark Woods, George Ferguson.

If you could please identify yourself?

SUSAN BORITZ: I will.

My name is Susan Boritz. I have lived in Sandy Hook for 16 years. I'm a marriage and family therapist in LMFT and I'm an alcohol and drug counselor. After working in a variety of different agencies doing therapy in December of 2011 I opened up my own private practice. I opened up that practice in Sandy Hook.

I named practice Pathways Counseling, both because of the personal journey I had to take in order to come home to practice in my own community, but because it is my strongly held belief that healing our wounds and creating needed change is a journey we must make one step at a time, and very often involves choosing a very different pathway from the one we've been walking.

So I'm both a resident and a mental health practitioner in Sandy Hook. In addition, I have specialized in trauma training and that enables me to work effectively people -- with people with trauma and I have been working with some of the people that were traumatized.

I work with a great many children and adolescence and I want to offer my perspective on two things; prevention and response. Here's the sad truth, preventing what happened on 12/14 was virtually impossible as things were and still are. The research is clear that mental illness in adolescents and young adults goes largely undiagnosed and untreated even as risk factors for serious illness and suicide are the highest at that point in the person's life span.

Serious mental illness isn't generally identified in its early stages and if it is

it's very often misattributed or masked. Even when parents and/or school officials are aware that a young person is struggling getting on the same page about what needs to be done is extremely difficult and even when there is agreement among the support of adults about the nature of the problem, the young person himself or herself very often doesn't accept the definition of the problem.

Legally, after the age of 18, parents are almost completely powerless to force their kids to comply with treatment, even when they can, there is very little effective, affordable, and accessible healthcare available for families. This is especially true when there is a substance abuse issue, which is very often the case and these youths wound up -- wind up in our criminal justice system and make up the majority of our prison population.

And response to the traumatic events, as a trauma trained clinician working in the town of Sandy Hook, every client that I meet has been traumatized by the shooting. They have not all lost loved ones, neither have I; however, they are all showing signs of the trauma, marriages are impacted, parents are struggling to parent, we have lost our sense of safety. Our fundamental identities have been shifting --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: If you could please --

SUSAN BORITZ: Almost done.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: -- please conclude. Thank you.

SUSAN BORITZ: This is what I want to say. The circle of traumatization is going to be much,

much wider, deeper, and longer than we may currently be aware of or are planning for and I want you to keep in the mind -- in mind this is going to be a long haul.

KAREN PIERCE: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for being here.

My name is Karen Pierce. I am a parent of children who attended Sandy Hook. I currently have a son who is a sophomore at the high school and I was on the end of receiving those texts while I was teaching in a classroom in Bridgeport.

I was teaching in Wyoming when something happened in a town called Cokeville, so I also have been through, as an educator, this kind of thing not of the same caliber, but incidents where teachers had to rise above occasions and I'm so grateful for teachers.

What I would like to say to you is this, you're here, you're up there because you believe in the Constitution. We're the Constitution state. I grew up in Delaware, the first state. You guys have to get over that, but that's how it is.

The Constitution is a living document. It breathes. It changes with us and you have the power to do that. We have a First Amendment. It doesn't give us the right to say anything. We have guidelines because people can say things that lead to trouble and so we have guidelines of what is acceptable free speech and if you cross that line we have laws.

I believe in the Second Amendment. I've fired a musket. I've done muzzleloaders. I lived

in Wyoming. I lived in Montana. I can gut a deer, but the point is I don't need to do that in Connecticut. I don't want a gun in my classroom.

We have people who are us and them, but the Constitution is we, the people. That's your job. You're to bring us together. You're to find that balance for us. That's your job. It's not all or nothing. It's not the Second Amendment or no guns. It's what is reasonable and right now it's our children in the middle. They're in the crossfire literally on the 14th, but now because we have adults who are standing here and here with words going back and forth our children are in the center.

You have that power for us to be we, the people. You have that and I beg of you to take that charge and look at our Constitution we the people. Not one -- not the other, but together, please.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

DANIEL KORMANIK: Good evening.

Hi guys.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: If you could identify yourself please.

DANIEL KORMANIK: Yes, I will.

Thank you very much for coming.

My name is Daniel Kormanik and I used to live at 85 Great Rain Run, Sandy Hook, and I still

live in Newtown. I have five daughters. Two of them went to Sandy Hook School a while back. I have five grandchildren.

There is a common -- other common things than the gun running through this -- these terrible events. There's been 32 some of them so says the Internet and a noted psychiatrist, Dr. David Healy from London.

In New York in -- recently for psychiatric meeting in response to what happened in Newtown said that -- in an interview that psychotropic drugs are behind the school massacres and this was his quote:

"And when nine out of 10 cases in both of the school shootings -- both the school shootings and the other mass shootings like the movie theater, involve these drugs being prescribed than a significant portion of these cases were either caused by these drugs being prescribed, or the drugs made a significant contribution to the problem because they cause violent behavior."

There is wide range of problems when it comes to looking at these drugs for children and he felt that very children really have the serious problems that warrant the treatment of these kind of drugs -- or mental illnesses with pills because it's more of a developmental thing and we're making a problem.

Psychotropic drugs are called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. Anyway, his other thing was that the medical doctors who prescribe the pills do not necessarily cure mental illness and they're too many doctors

who are issuing these things willy nilly.

Independently there's -- I guess -- database available on the Internet that shows more than 5,000 cases in which SSRI drugs have been associated with violent behavior in the U.S. and worldwide. This has been posted on the net. It's been compiled from the media, from reports and scientific journals as well as Federal Drug Administration testimony.

These drugs are Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Celexa, Lexapro and Luvox

SENATOR MCKINNEY: If you could -- could please conclude?

DANIEL KORMANIK: Yep. Okay.

I want you to understand this, if that is the real problem, then kids undergoing treatment who are already in schools may be an embedded tragedy waiting to happen. In taking away guns from law-abiding citizens and legal owners will not prevent anything because, as we know, the criminal and a mental case will not -- will choose a different tool from matches and gasoline, to a speeding automobile, or how about poison on candy. I mean, they're only limited by their mind and the Internet.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you -- thank you, Mr. --

DANIEL KORMANIK: Yeah. One -- one last -- one last point.

You talk about guns, I know five -- I can think of five pilots that wish they had a gun on 9/11.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

DANIEL KORMANIK: Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Is Cathy Robinson -- is Cathy Robinson here?

Mark Woods. George Ferguson.

GEORGE FERGUSON: I'm George Ferguson. I'm a Newtown resident. I'm also a member of the legislative council here in town. My remarks are my own.

I'm a father of three children, all of whom probably graduated from this school. I want thank you all for being here in Newtown and for your willingness to serve on these task force, looking to find facts and information in order to seek solutions. I do not envy the complexity of your task.

On December 14th tragedy visited Newtown. It was unimaginable and inconceivable. It has caused tremendous waves of pain and sorry emanating from a center that starts with our 26 families, the entire school community, the residents of the town, region, state, nation and clearly from the response the world.

The question I ask you to seek an answer to is the one that all of -- all of us have been asking ourselves over and over and over again. What could bring a young man to such a heinous crime? I will grant you that the answer will likely be -- never -- never be completely known. Certainly there will never be a complete or acceptable answer, because this was an act that defies a reason. No reasonable explanation will be found.

That notwithstanding, we must try to learn from this tragedy. We must discover what circumstances, substances, environment or chemical exposures, interactions, illness, anger, injury, slight communication or miscommunication or any of the myriad of other factors might have led to this man's descent into madness.

We cannot legislate these problems away, but we can create, empower and provide seed funding for an entity or entities that do -- do the detailed and hard work to seek facts, try to establish causalities, identify warning signs and empower and implore people to act in the face of these warning signs.

To honor Newtown's 26, I ask you to seek facts, answers and solutions. Let some good come of all of this.

Once again, I thank you for your concern and for your support. You are Newtown. We are all Newtown.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Neil Choudbury to be followed by Curt Riebeling and Charles Peck.

NEIL CHOUDBURY: Hello. My name is Dr. Neil Choudbury of the Legislative Council in Newtown, but I am speaking tonight as a father of a first grader and preschooler in Newtown.

First off, I would like to thank you all for your efforts to prevent future tragedy in our state. This truly bipartisan effort is inspirational and I hope the mutual respect

that our political parties are showing each other in Connecticut can spread to our nation. I applaud the multi-pronged approach to this effort. There is no one solution to reducing the frequency of these atrocities. My statement will focus on the most debated component, guns, nothing that my focus should not be taken as a sign that school safety and mental health are lesser in terms of importance.

Indeed, these efforts will likely produce -- will likely prove to be our most effective tools. That said, I believe the AR15 and similar rifles are not necessary for home defense. I believe there is no good reason to allow the high capacity clips.

The arguments stating that banning such weapons is pointless because criminals will still have access to them is ridiculous and you've already heard it implies that why should we pass any laws. They'll just get ignored.

And I would like to remind you that Adam Lanza was not a criminal per se. It is likely that he -- he used his mother's legally owned gun to commit this crime. He probably wouldn't have had it if it wasn't in her house legally. I argue that the functionality in terms of lethal energy and speed of firing of this weapon contributed to the sheer number of deaths we're dealing with.

Additionally, this is a weapon designed to decimate its victims adding to the pain that the parents have to deal with when they viewed the bodies of their children. It's not a weapon designed to hunt deer, but to destroy

human life. Had such a weapon been unavailable, I submit to you that we might still be dealing with a tragedy, but of smaller proportions, and each and every life saved matters. He couldn't have killed that many people with a handgun -- that quickly.

At the same time, I beg that our tragedy not be used to push an agenda beyond what is warranted and that you use common sense to support the safety of citizens. I ask you to listen to each other on both sides of the aisle and come up with a solution that balances the safety of our children, as a priority, with the rights of people to defend themselves against common criminals.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Curt Riebeling.

CURT RIEBELING: Hi. I'm Dr. Curt Riebeling. I've lived in and cared for the people of Newtown through my chiropractic practice here for over 30 years.

I would like to thank all of the members of the task force for your efforts and for being here to listen to us tonight.

The unbelievably horrific shootings at Sandy Hook School, I'm sure, have left a deep and lasting impact on all of you, but I must tell you that seeing firsthand the overwhelming impact of this tragedy on the people of this community, and feeling the devastating effects directly of this nightmare happening in our own town with my own neighbors, friends and parent -- patient's lives being forever dramatically changed has made me feel strongly

that we must all be completely and utterly committed to doing everything reasonably possible to make sure that the chances of anything this horrific happening again are brought to an absolute minimum.

That is why I implore you to support passing and act -- effective legislation in line with President Obama's proposals to require full background checks for any and all gun purchases, ban semi-automatic assault style weapons with high -- and high count ammo magazines, improve mental healthcare access and utilization, investigate ways to decrease the deleterious effects of violent video games, movies and other media on our culture.

I would also urge you to go a step further and pass the proposals of the Connecticut Against Gun Violence Association which would make it even harder for individuals to access military style weapons in order to commit mass murder.

We've heard from people saying that you cannot pass this type of legislation because it would interfere with Second Amendment rights. I would respectfully like to point out that while Second Amendment guarantees the right to bear arms, it does not guarantee the right to own any and all types of weapons, just as an individual is not allowed to own a nuclear weapon, a surface air missile, biologic weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

AR15 rifles with 30-round magazines were designed for military use to kill many, many people in a short amount of time and there's no justification for private individuals to need access to them. The right to bear arms needs necessary restrictions, especially when

it interferes with the rights of others, just as all rights have some restrictions.

Freedom of speech is restricted and that you cannot yell fire in a crowded theater and risk causing panic and injury or commit a libel or slander to injure someone's reputation. Freedom to smoke is limited in that you cannot smoke in public places where secondhand smoke can be offensive and injurious to those around them.

Enacting reasonable gun legislation does not interfere with the rights of responsible, qualified, legal gun owners for hunting, sport or self-defense, but it will decrease the chances of guns and especially assault rifles from getting into the hands of those who want to kill people.

Just summarize. Wearing seatbelts was -- was made mandatory. Some people complained about restrictions of freedom of choice. When smoking was banned from restaurants some shouted resistance. When drunk driving laws were toughened some were shocked by the severity. Yet all of these measures have saved thousands of lives and helped to change the mindset of our culture making it no longer acceptable to drive drunk and put the lives of others at risk.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you. Thank you.

Charles Peck. Is Charles Peck here?

To be followed by Allison Schwartz and Dan O'Donnell.

CHARLES PECK: First of all, thank you.

My name is Charles Peck. Thank you very much for your attention, coming to Newtown and also your attention at this late hour.

Okay. I would like to say a few words about school security and mental health and gun restrictions. Regarding school security, the NRA has proposed that we place armed guards in every school. Let there no mistake there's -- this is nothing other than a cynical attempt to divert attention from the most effective levers we have to protect our children.

Aside from being most likely ineffective, there were armed guards at Fort Hood and Virginia Tech and Columbine. Aside from being dangerous with the likelihood of accidents a near certainty with 100,000 schools, open 180 days a year, with hundreds of visitors every day.

And aside from being very costly, about \$4,000 per assault weapon per year I feel we should instead create and maintain a helpful, a welcoming, hopeful, safe environment for our kids using unobstructive -- unobtrusive, rather technologies.

Marksmanship should not be an entry on a school employee's job application form. I also believe we need a renewed effort that every stage of a child's development to teach our children how to recognize their emotions and redirect their behaviors to effective outcomes and to seek adult support if they can't on their own.

Mental healthcare has been offered as a response to gun violence. I agree, but it should not be the only response. As Martin

Singleman, former president of the American Psychological Association noted, we do not presently have the ability to reliably predict who will go over the edge or when.

In my opinion we need to make sure that those who are at risk never get close to the edge. To me this means expanding access to mental healthcare and funding it fully, as we do other forms of healthcare. This not only has potential to reduce gun violence, but it would also reduce untold suffering for those afflicted by mental illness and those who care for them.

Regarding a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, we must remember that we're asking millions of responsible gun owners to give up freedoms they enjoy today. For most, this is undeserved and unfortunate. In my view, though it's also necessary.

I've been a gun owner since I was 10 and I know when you try to buy a gun you buy more than just a piece of equipment. You buy a measure of self-importance, empowerment and control. When you buy an assault weapon you buy self-control -- self-important, empowerment and control on steroids.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: If -- if you could please -- please wrap up. Thanks.

CHARLES PECK: Okay.

In a society that glorifies violent solutions to problems and the technologies that make them possible it's no wonder the young men through a misunderstood, powerless and without control have turned to assault weapons to

solve their problems. We need to rid our society of these weapons so they are no longer viewed as solutions to any problem.

For those who -- I'm almost done -- okay -- for those who made absolutist arguments citing the Second Amendment I say the Second Amendment is not a suicide pack. The only absolutes are 3,000 people -- 30,000 people killed each year. On average a mass killing every two months and 26 of our most innocent killed in Sandy Hook. So we have a serious --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

CHARLES PECK: -- problem. It's up to you to solve it. Please don't let us down.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you. Thank you.

Could you identify yourself please?

DAN O'DONNELL: Yes. My name is Dan O'Donnell. I live in Sandy Hook. I have a 5-year old daughter and a seven-year old daughter. On December 14th after the shootings both of my daughters were unaccounted for, for two hours. Those were the longest two hours of my life.

I ask you to act comprehensively in -- and thoroughly gun control laws. I know you will be challenged during this session by an incredibly powerful gun control industry. I trust you will overcome those challenges to protect our children and to set a precedent for this country. Please let your action this session be your lifelong legacy.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Next on the list is Rosemarie Slowinski,
Stacey Zimmerman, Debra Sourby.

And before we go, let me just quickly mention,
it is roughly 11:30. We have the room until
midnight. There's a lot of very hard working
people who have to work after we leave to get
the high school ready to go for 6:00 tomorrow
morning, so I appreciate how long so many of
you have waited and we want to hear from as
many as possible in the last 30 minutes.

Thank you.

ROSEMARIE SLOWINSKI: Thank you.

My name is Rosemarie Slowinski Destories.
I've been a Newtown resident for 12 years.
Both of my children attended Sandy Hook
Elementary and have been through the school
system. My daughter was a classmate of Adam
Lanza's.

First of all, I would like you to know that if
this can happen in Newtown, this could happen
in any -- any town in this country. Newtown --
-- I -- I mean, going through this school
system they were so well prepared. I remember
trying to deliver cupcakes to Sandy Hook
Elementary and trying to get past the
secretaries at that door to get buzzed in to
walk down the hall -- they used to do drills
and I used to think, why would they do these
drills where they would -- they would say,
okay we're on lockdown, and they're butting --
I'm like, are you kidding me and they -- it's
in Newtown.

Things like that don't happen in Newtown. The teachers in our school district save lives. They save lives that day because they were so well prepared. So first of all I want you to know that this isn't just, you know, oh we had some crazy guy who came out of the blue and did this, this can happen anywhere.

And the other thing I would like to say about the Newtown School system is they have a zero tolerance for bullying. I mean, they are so great about looking out for kids who have issues and having the best buddies program, so please, please, please, don't just let people pigeon hole this and -- and say oh, it's just, you know, just some crazy guy.

This is the other thing -- and I don't want to revisit everything else that everyone else has said, because everyone has made great points, but I would like -- I would like ask, because I keep hearing the NRA advocates who to me I don't think represent the vast majority of gun owners.

I think most gun owners are sensible, reasonable people who -- who love their children and want -- and want to protect them, so this is the question I have for the NRA, because this is the question I keep hearing and no one's answered it for me.

They say only -- only a -- okay -- if -- if there's a bad guy with a gun the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a -- a good -- good guy with a gun. So this is my question, who determines who's the good guy? Okay. If 40 percent of the firearms being sold in this country are being sold without background checks, who's deciding who

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the good guys are? Are you letting the private citizens decide who a good guy is? Are -- I mean, there's -- there's absolutely no regulation what so ever.

And -- and the other thing is people keep coming up here and saying oh, we already have all of these laws in place we don't need more laws, the laws are not working.

So in summary what I would like to say is, please, please, please be the leaders. Show the nation Connecticut must stand strong. We need you. We really, really need you to step --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

ROSEMARIE SLOWINSKI: -- forward and be an example for the rest of the country. Please.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

Stacy. Stacy Zimmerman then Debra Sourby, then Paul D'Agostino.

STACEY ZIMMERMAN: Members of the task force, my name is Stacey Zimmerman. Many of you know me as a representative of SEIU in Hartford, but today I'm here as a Sandy Hook resident.

Oddly enough most you probably wouldn't be aware, but I am actually a pistol permit holder and a gun owner in Sandy Hook, but I strongly believe we need universal background checks, limited magazines and the rest of the laws that folks spoke about earlier today.

I also think that we need to recognize that our mental health situation in this state and

this country is far from what it should be. We did deinstitutionalize people and mainstream them which was probably good for them and good for humanity in general, but we must make sure that we fund these programs adequately, so people can get the help they need.

And lastly, I've spoken to some of you privately about this, is, 10 years from now, when this is history and many of us are no longer in these positions, we need to make sure that the first responders, the parents, the children have access to the safety net they will need as people hit adolescence and these things come back to them, as the first responder's families go through the troubles that I'm sure -- I hate to say it -- they will.

In speaking to many of my members who were on the scene we're going to have problems long term and we must -- we should institute something that is there after we are no longer here to remember.

So thank you very much for coming to my home town. Hopefully we can be here for something a little happier next time. Thank you.

DEBRA SOURBY: Hello. My name is Debra Sourby. I am resident of Newtown and I'm here to urge you to pass the proposals that were submitted by the Connecticut Against Gun Violence Organization.

We've had a lot of moments of silence in Newtown since the shootings and sometimes in that moment of silence beyond the -- the grief that we all have felt, I've sometimes thought

about what kind of society could we have and part of being a Legislator and a law maker is to have some vision of what our society could be not what it just is now.

My dream is to see our nation without guns in the hands of citizens, but I realize this will probably never happen; however, we can still work for a more peaceful society instead of standing by and watching gun violence escalate with every passing year.

I understand there will always be bad people and people who are insane and this why the concept of accountability for responsible -- I'm making my little quote signs -- responsible gun owners will never be enough, because we have to remove the temptation of using guns to solve problems, commit crimes and act out delusional or paranoid thoughts and fantasies.

The only way we can do that is to limit the many guns from the public's access. There are already so many guns out there in the communities across the country that we'll never get them all back, even if we had the money to buy them all back, but going forward we can limit access to the guns that kill so many in quick succession, such as the assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons.

I feel that gun manufacturers should bear the cost of safety measures just as the auto industry did for car safety measures. There should be extra liability insurance required for gun owners so that they and not the victims pay for hospitalizations, wrongful death, wrongful injury claims, as well as funeral and survivor benefits to the deceased

families.

We will never have a peaceful society with so many armed citizens escalating the level of violence. Arming teachers, bus drivers, EMS, doctors, pilots and so on will not bring us peace. It will only escalate violence and create a more fear driven society.

It's time to end the business as usual approach to gun ownership. It may be a right, but it is also a huge responsibility that has been abdicated by some -- some responsible gun owners and by many irresponsible gun owners.

That responsibility has monetary costs that must be paid by the gun -- gun industry and gun owners, not paid by our children.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Paul D'Agostino. After Paul, Michael Daubit.

PAUL D'AGOSTINO: Hi. My name is Paul D'Agostino. I'm a Newtown resident and a parent of a school aged little boy.

I want to start by thanking all of you for coming here and your hard work and the time you're spending on these difficult issues. I'm here tonight because now is the time. During the 1950s and 1960s automobile related deaths climbed steadily. By the 1970s, 50,000 people were dying every year from car related deaths. Leadership came from the state level with mandatory seat belt legislation. Federal legislation followed leading to steadily decreasing motor vehicle deaths over the next 30 years.

During the last 10 years gun related deaths

have climbed steadily. At this point over 30,000 people are killed every year in gun related incidents. By 2015, guns may surpass cars as a leading cause of death in this country. The parallels are pretty clear. This is our seat belt moment. This has got to be our seat belt moment.

I support the proposal put forth by Connecticut Against Gun Violence. I hope you do, too. Now is the time.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Michael Daubert. I hope I pronounced that right.

Then Dan O'Connor, Jeffrey Zipluk.

MICHAEL DAUBERT: How do you do? My name is Mike Daubert and I just want to say thank you for being here. I know it's a long night. We greatly appreciate the work you're putting in on this.

Myself, I'm a 22-year resident of Newtown. I have two children in the school system. I'm very active here in town. I love this place. I thought this was my sanctuary away from all of the violence of the inner cities.

I have -- I have 20 years law enforcement experience. My brothers are police officers. My dad was an avid gun collector. I've worked many years in the inner cities and was very pro-gun up until now. Things have to change.

I've heard the call for the shots fired at a school system. I ran up there believing it was my son's school, who is at the middle

school. I was glad as I turned the corner to understand it wasn't his school, but saddened to hear Sandy Hook.

I went to that location. I tried to help the best I could at the firehouse. I saw the -- the pain in those children's faces as they ran from the school, the pain in the police officer's faces, the pain in the teacher's faces that once again will never go away.

There is no need for an assault weapon at this time. There is no need for 30-round magazines at this time in our history -- in our place. These laws must change. The only thing I would say on that is we've been over that a lot and I see a lot of this argument is directed towards our gun violence and what we should do about guns.

We're missing a very big picture, the mental illness. Right now it's 70 percent guns, 30 percent talk of mental illness. The bigger picture is the mental illness that was allowed to go on and on and on that built up to the ability of this person to use a gun.

We should have background checks. That's basic for anyone with a weapon. If you're charged with DWI, you're charged with domestic violence they remove you from your guns. Why if you have a mental illness are there any guns allowed in that household? The mental illness part needs to be looked at thoroughly. That's what we need to look at and work on.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

MICHAEL DAUBIRT: Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Dan O'Connor, Jeffrey Zipluk.

DAN O'CONNOR: How do you do? My name is Dan O'Connor and I'm a deacon at Saint Rose. And over the last month I've become an expert at burying people, and a couple of things have struck me. I was watching you all on TV this evening, having come from a funeral where we buried an 81-year old, I want to say that it's easy -- burying an 81-year old is easy; burying eight little kids that are six and seven ain't easy. It changed who I am. I hope it changed you. We're a town that's a mess emotionally and we would love for you to be a mess too.

Appreciate you coming. I only have a couple of things to say. One, get prayer back in the schools. Try it. I'll bet you 12 cents people were praying a couple of months ago -- or a month ago.

Number two, I watched a movie over the last week it was Abraham Lincoln, and what struck me was the legislature, the struggle to do something extraordinary in history.

I found myself attending funeral (inaudible) people because I was called there to do it. You're called in history to do something -- to do something. Be moral. Look inside. Have the courage that we saw displayed by the parents over and over again talking about their dead children. Have that courage.

I don't know what your decision is. I'm not asking you to consider all of the things that you have to consider, but I am asking you to look inside and make courageous choices. We need courage. We've seen it. Our town has

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it, still does and we're asking you to exemplify the courage that can lead this nation.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Jeffrey -- Jeff. After Jeff -- I'm going to apologize to Erin in advance -- Erin Nikitchyuk and Gary Seri.

Go ahead.

JEFFREY ZIPLUK: Hi. It's -- my name is Jeff Zipluk. My family have been in town for about 10 years. My son is a -- attends elementary school -- another one Head O'Meadow.

Along with the rest of the town, country and world we're obviously devastated by the terrible tragedy and can't even imagine what the families are going through. They have been and will continue to be in our prayers.

In general, my wife and I try to be very active in the community and that's somehow found me to be volunteered to be the Cub Master for -- for my son's Cub Scout pack. Given that we want to do our part raising well-rounded youth, I thought it was my duty to practice what I preach, so to speak, with respect to Scout's Oath and duties, to speak my thoughts on the subject, if only for my own conscience.

Any real conversation shouldn't just be about gun control, but rather a comprehensive overall plan including and likely, most importantly, the mental health. As much as I might identify more with conservative views -- at least fiscally so, I am perhaps

surprisingly so to others in this room for common sense background checks, for common sense and quite -- quite a bit of even what Obama signed in his Executive Orders. They all seem reasonable.

Please enforce and potentially -- and even enhance current laws, but keep in mind that new limits are a slippery slope to remove or slash nullification and the more you erode the Constitution the less it matters when it becomes most important. The Bill of Rights is a package with each amendment reinforcing and supporting the others.

To address comments from earlier tonight, just of individuals are against increased Second Amendment limits doesn't mean they think that everyone is out to take away their guns, or they might not even be gun owners themselves. They may just understand the importance of the overall Constitutional framework and the safeties they provide.

You might have made up your minds already are have formed views, but whatever you recommend and pass through legislation should be a complete solution that protects the people's rights while looking to solve the complete problem and not just the flashy headline. The repercussions for your decisions will have lasting effects for many generations and this responsibility should not be taken lightly or with due consideration -- without due consideration for the complete facts.

In closing, and since there were previous comments -- quotes from Benjamin Franklin, and because I always like a little bit of history, he famously said, "Those who would give up

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essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither safety nor liberty -- liberty nor safety."

I would ask please think long and hard and only then implement what you feel is right for both Newtown and the wider community.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you.

How bad did I do with the name, Erin?

ERIN NIKITCHYUK: But everybody does bad, so that's okay.

My name is Erin Nikitchyuk. I am a Sandy Hook mom. We moved here eight and a half years ago when my son Bear was weeks old. He was in the school the day of the shooting. He was in the hallway with the shooter.

Society failed Adam Lanza. He failed our community. The causes are many. The problems are complex. You all know this. My pro-gun friends have said to me, there will always be crazies. There's nothing you can do about it. I choose not to be that helpless. I choose not to be that cynical in my outlook and I hope you do too.

The status quo is not okay. My expectations that this world will change for the better because of this, rests with you and I believe that I'm in good hands.

You've heard about guns, both for and against. You've heard about pleas to consider mental illness, violent video games, media. You've

heard calls to reinstate character lessons in our school and our society. I know you were listening. I watched you.

I'm not here to rehash all the very good points that were made today. We won't be able to eliminate violence from our society. It's just not possible, but we need to make efforts to reduce it.

Even freedom of speech is regulated. Small steps can make significant changes. We can preserve rights while still making progress to making this a safer and better world. I'm here to say that you are my leaders. You are my voice. I didn't elect all of you. You represent all of the me's in this world.

I am asking you to please lead us through your actions towards a culture of civility and compassion, cooperation, listen to our voices, listen to each other, choose your words carefully, avoid trigger words that instantaneously lead us to the point where we're not listening and not communicating. Let's not talk about gun control. Let's talk about preventing violence. There's a big difference.

Investigate facts over rhetoric. Challenge everything you hear. Educate yourself. Think, talk, find common ground. We can do this together. The eyes of the world are watching you. We have done a very good job in this town of being civil to each other. Please pay that forward. Show Washington how it's done. Show the world how it's done. Be our leaders.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Is Gary Seri here? If not, Adam Zuckerman.

ADAM ZUCKERMAN: Hello. My name is Adam Zuckerman. I'm a Newtown resident. Still got power? Yep. Newtown resident, I've only been here for about 12 years which makes me a newcomer. My kids have gone to the Newtown schools. I have one girl who is a senior here and one girl who is at University of Tampa, who went to school with Adam Lanza.

And I wanted to first of all thank you all for taking all this time. I had the wonderful privilege of taking a break from this, going home, tucking my daughter in and I know how much that means to so many people around me and I thank you for being here sitting it straight through.

A couple of points that I would like to make. I've just been very disturbed by some of the - - the way that some of the argument -- arguments are being framed. First of all, I was amazed to learn that the Second Amendment 30 years ago nobody talked about it in terms of the civilian's ability to over throw the government.

That this is a relatively new argument in the history of the Constitution. That if you look back from the 1970s all the way back to the 1770s the question was were this -- the general population to be able to be armed for the common defense or was only the militia, but nobody -- nobody reasonable or rational was talking about the civilians being armed for over throwing their own government, and I fear that the same people who are promoting

that argument today are the ones who we've heard promoting Second Amendment options when presidential elections don't go the way that they want, and I just find that a very dangerous and very undemocratic way of thinking and so that scares me to hear that.

The second point that I -- that I keep hearing is people saying that they want to have the same fire power as the criminal who might invade their home. In the 1980s when the first assault weapon ban was being passed I was a member of a motorcycle club that consisted almost entirely of off-duty police officers and all of them were saying you don't want that type of weapon in your home. It can go through your wall and then you're neighbor's wall. It's just the wrong weapon for self-defense, so I just wanted to say that.

And finally, the whole slippery slope argument. Civilization I believe is founded on the idea that we can stand somewhere on a slope -- stand firmly there. Live there with our neighbors and not slide down to the extremes that are being promoted. It's not a slippery slope. The world is full of hills.

Thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank -- thank you, Adam.

Unfortunately it's about five minutes to midnight, so we have time for perhaps one or two others. I -- I just want to remind you that there is a transcript that will be made out of all of the testimony contributed tonight and that testimony will be invaluable to the work of the task force and if don't get the chance to speak tonight you can still

submit testimony online at the task force website, which is www.cga.ct.gov/asaferconnecticut, and I can assure the -- the men and women on this stage will read that testimony that's submitted.

Is Timothy Richmond here?

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: Thank you very much for coming here today.

My name is Tim Richmond. I'm resident of Oxford, the next town over. I'm a first responder. I'm a volunteer fire fighter, a career fire fighter and EMT and I thank God that I wasn't one of the first responders that had to go to this tragedy. My son almost made it, his mutual aid company.

In any event, first let me say that my heart goes out to everyone who was involved in this horror. As a parent and grandparent I can't conceive what the families are going through.

On that day we saw the absolute best side of human nature in our first responders and the teachers and educators at Sandy Hook School, and a side that represents abject evil. Now, let me state up front I don't know what can be done to keep events like this from happening short of reengineering the human brain.

Until human evolution somehow short circuits our propensity to harm our fellows things like this will still happen. Quick politically motivated fixes are not going to stop it and I submit to you that you cannot legislate common sense or morality. It's been tried before and it's never worked.

America has tried prohibition before, whether it's alcohol or drugs. That's not working too well. If you do that with firearms you're going to have an underground economy with them. You're going to make petty thugs into crime czars, just like it's done with the drug problem, but on a much grander scale.

There are those that say the Second Amendment doesn't guarantee a person the right to own a modern sporting rifle -- I don't like to use the A word -- that the founding fathers did not have the AR15s in mind when the Constitution was written. Well, I submit to you that until the first third of the 20th century the civilian population of the United States had access to far better firearm technology than the U.S. soldier. In every conflict until World War II when the M1 Garand rifle was made standard the fire power edge went to civilians. Our founding fathers knew this. They -- they understood that we have certain inalienable rights and the Second Amendment is one of those enumerated rights.

Semi-automatic rifles, shotguns and handguns have been available to the general public well before the military and police routinely used them. Again, our founding fathers knew and embraced the fact that a free people should be afforded the same level of personal protection as those individuals whose job was keeping order.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Tim, if I could just -- you're going to be our last speaker. If I could just ask you --

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: I will.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: -- to conclude very briefly.

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: I would like to see existing laws enforced. If you're going to do anything to change those laws up the penalties. Background checks, I have no problem with those. School security, I also think that that's very, very important and most of all, mental health. Lots and lots of support for our mental health professionals.

Again, I do remember -- I'm -- I'm not a rocket scientist --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Tim --

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: -- but I remember --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: -- Tim --

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: -- Newton's law --

SENATOR MCKINNEY: -- thank you. Thank you very much, Tim.

TIMOTHY RICHMOND: -- and I thank you.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Again, ladies and gentlemen, if -- if you didn't get the chance to speak tonight, please submit your testimony online and if you'll just indulge us with a few thank yous.

First, on -- on behalf of the Newtown delegation, Representative Bolinsky, Representative Hovey, and Representative Carter, we want to thank our colleagues who've come from all across the state to come here from Newtown, especially Senator Williams,

Speaker Sharkey and Representative Larry Cafero.

We want to thank the Newtown High School facility and maintenance team; Tom Swetts the auditorium manager, Mark Pompano the director of security, Jason Hiruo the assistant principal, Charles Dumais the principal. We want to thank the Newtown Police, the State Police, the State Capitol Police, including Lieutenant Sinko and Officer Jason Flynn.

We want to thank our staffs who've all worked in bipartisan collegial way, who've done a terrific job and obviously Senator Williams has some thank yous as well, but the most important thank you is to all of the people of Newtown who came out tonight.

Senator Williams.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Senator McKinney.

I -- I want to thank you, Senator McKinney, the Newtown delegation, Representative Cafero, Speaker Sharkey, all of my colleagues, but especially a thank you to all of the individuals who came out here tonight, the family, the parents, the spouses and relatives of the children and adults we lost and then everyone else from Newtown who testified. Whether you've got a short drive or a long drive, drive safely we all have a lot of work to do beginning tomorrow.

Thank you.