

Good afternoon, Task Force Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Alessia Bell. I live in Westport, Connecticut, with my husband and two children, a five-year-old girl and three-year-old boy.

I am speaking today to urge you to pass the legislation proposed by Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

We are all beyond heartbroken at the loss of 20 precious children and of the six heroic teachers and administrators who were victims of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary. This senseless massacre is only one of an unconscionable number of recent mass murders committed by mentally disturbed people who had easy access to assault weapons fed by high capacity magazine clips.

The proliferation of these lethal weapons – easily available even to people with a criminal background or a history of mental disturbance – was the essential, necessary component in these mass murders. We may not be able to determine which criminals or which mental illnesses lead to mass murder but we can be absolutely certain that military-grade assault weapons are tools that kill, and that no civilian should have the right to possess them. Guns are the second leading cause of death among young people in America, far outpacing deaths from cancer, heart disease, infections, or any other medical cause. Among all the leading nations of the world, only the United States has such a criminal record. We must take bold action to reduce these senseless deaths and to protect our children!

Do not give in to a fringe element or gun companies that would have you believe that the Second Amendment secures an unfettered right to all guns, all the time. This view is a gross misinterpretation of the Second Amendment. Military-grade guns and magazine clips belong in the military and law enforcement, not among America's civilian people. Hunters and other responsible firearm owners – indeed the majority of members of the NRA – support bans on assault weapons and high

capacity magazine clips and favor mandatory registration, permit, and universal background check requirements.

The “no grandfathering” provisions of Connecticut Against Gun Violence’s proposed legislation are absolutely critical to making the proposed gun safety measures a success. I would suggest tax deductions for returning banned weapons to compensate for owners’ economic loss, and reasonable rather than draconian penalties for violation. But lethal assault weapons and high capacity magazine clips must be kept out of Connecticut.

I hug my children tight each morning as I send them off to school, still grieving for the families in Newtown, knowing that I will do everything in my power to protect my own and our nation’s children. They are counting on me, and I am counting on you.

Please follow your legal and moral imperative to respond to the Newtown tragedy with courage, hope, and bold action. Refuse to be threatened by radicals or by gun corporations. Put our children’s lives first - Pass Connecticut Against Gun Violence’s proposed legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.