

January 28th, 2013

Andrea Sferes

South Salem, New York

Daughter attends school in Danbury, CT.

To the Members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group,

On December 14th, we lost much more than 26 lives. This event, as tragic and horrific as it was, left us in a state of panic. Literally. On December 17th a person in Ridgefield thought they saw a man carrying a gun which caused the town and neighboring towns to go into unannounced lockdown and thousands of parents into panic. That night a friend's 8 year old awoke screaming because she dreamt a shooter had entered her classroom. She also wet her bed, exhibiting symptoms of PTSD. I ask you, is this how citizens of the world's greatest nation should live?

While we lost 20 children, most of whom would have grown into wonderful caring citizens whom would have birthed numerous other wonderful, caring citizens, we also lost our peace-of-mind. At this crucial moment, I look to the other side and ask for what? For some people who feel the need to defend themselves with high capacity weapons versus lower capacity weapons? Or go to the range and shoot high capacity weapons for sport? Hunting is on the decline and there is and will be no need to rise up against the government, yet gun sales are increasing all the time leaving us with more guns per capita than any other nation, and no actual need for them.

As many of us know Min Yingjun, a mentally ill man from the Henan province village of Chengping in central China attacked a bunch of children outside a primary school with a knife on December 14th. Though 22 children were injured, none lost their lives. This fact, eerily and interestingly occurring on the very same day as the Newtown tragedy, tells us that if you take the guns away from the mentally ill person, none will perish. That puts to bed the argument that gun violence is a mental illness issue only.

Gun violence is and has been pervasive for a very long time. Growing up in Maine, it was not uncommon for one child to accidentally kill another when playing with their father's gun, or to receive news of a suicide. Just last year a man from South Salem, NY which borders Ridgefield killed his wife, two children, and then himself. He was a lawyer, exhibiting no signs of mental illness. Now, we find ourselves in an age when mass shootings are becoming pervasive themselves.

I ask you, no I plead with you, to not let our children die in vain, to restore our peace-of mind and sense of safety. We are a great nation so why do we not have the right to live without gun violence? To pass these gun safety laws would be righting a wrong, that we have turned a blind eye to for one weak reason or another for far too long. It is a desperately needed correction that would allow us to like New York, act as an example for the rest of our country in doing the right

thing and help restore our sense of safety, peace of mind, and our reputation as the most evolved country in the world.

Sincerely,

Andrea Sferes

[see attached file: a.sferes_testimony.doc]

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