

Greetings committee members,

My name is Andrew Dodson and I'm a resident of Niantic, a taxpayer, and a gun owner. I stand before you today to, hopefully, convince you and the rest of the audience that the knee-jerk reactions we've seen proposed in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook tragedy are nothing but reactionary legislation that will do little to nothing to protect the innocent.

There's no doubt that Sandy Hook brought to light many issues that need to be addressed. However, many of the proposed bills that I've seen seek to only limit the rights of gun owners like me and don't address the real issues involved here.

For example, why was a mentally-ill individual allowed to be out, in public, and unsupervised? It may sound harsh, but that individual should have been locked up and receiving treatment. This individual also proved that security in our schools is weak and in desperate need of improvement. However, I believe that the biggest thing he proved is that NO law will stop a person bent on causing destruction and chaos. Criminals aren't criminals because they obey the law and no amount of laws will suddenly change a criminal's mind. In the course of this tragedy, this individual broke numerous laws. So I ask, what other laws would he, or any other criminal, have obeyed if it was in their head to commit such heinous acts? Banning or limiting access to certain types of firearms by the law abiding will do nothing to prevent another mass shooting by a criminal. The fact that we already have an assault weapons ban here in CT should serve as adequate proof that the law is ineffective and that an outright ban of ALL firearms would still do nothing to prevent tragedies such as these.

Despite these glaring issues, it saddens me to see that the primary focus of all the proposed laws is to make me, and others like me, a criminal. WE are innocent in all of this, yet the new proposals target us and the activities that we enjoy on a regular basis. Now, I'm not a paranoid person, yet I can't help but wonder what the motivation is for all of these new laws. I have to ask: what is it that you hope to accomplish with these new laws? Is it just to stick a proverbial feather in your hat to say that you did something?

If you're looking to do something, do something effective and focus on the right areas: improve mental health care, improve school security, and increase and enforce the penalties for

those who commit violent crimes with firearms. To focus on punishing innocent gun owners by placing more restrictions on us is ill-founded, unnecessary, and it ignores the real problems. I understand that it's easier to blame an inanimate object than it is to tackle the hard issues and say "let's provide better care for the mentally ill" or "why *don't* we consider allowing teachers to protect themselves and their classrooms?"

I realize there are people who will disagree with me on the concept of allowing teachers to carry a concealed weapon in schools, but hear me out: what is the common thread in all of the mass shootings we've seen in this country? They are ALL gun-free zones. Columbine, Virginia Tech, the movie theater in Colorado, Newtown, and many others – all of these areas were and are gun-free zones. Why? Any logical person who applies one iota of critical thinking to this concept will come to the same conclusion: gun-free zones are only gun-free for the law abiding. I'm not saying to mandate arming teachers, but at least give them the option of protecting themselves and their students. If a teacher is already a pistol permit holder outside of school, what is it that changes about them when they walk onto school grounds? The answer is NOTHING!

In conclusion, I implore ALL of the legislators of this state to consider the repercussions of their actions and realize that a law is simply words on a piece of paper – a statement that requires the agreement and compliance of those that it is intended to affect. There will always be those that will not obey the laws, and it is irrational to think that those intent on breaking the law will live within the new laws. For a law to be effective, the penalties for breaking it must be proportional to the severity of the action that broke that law, but the penalties must also be enforced. Thank you for your time and I hope that you take into serious consideration the issues that I have described above.