

Dear Senators and Representatives,

The wickedness and gut-wrenching horror of Sandy Hook has yet to fade from memory. I hope it never will. For unless we keep this tragedy in the forefront of our minds, we may lessen our efforts to do what we can to prevent another.

This monstrous act was clearly one of a mentally ill deranged man bent on mindless destruction. In our passion to halt future crises we must not blame the blameless. *The gun is not the cause.*

Our broken and completely ineffective mental health care system, our culture of violence in the media and “games” of destruction of life without doubt contribute to these insane acts.

There was another tragedy in CT that I have also not forgotten. The home invasion in Cheshire changed my life. My husband and I live in Goshen. Before Cheshire, we rarely turned on our alarm system. Since then we have upgraded it to the degree that I sometimes feel like I live in a fortress.

I am a licensed gun owner of over 20 years. I target shoot for sport. I have taken personal defense classes. I still live in fear. I pray that I will never be confronted with a situation in which I have to defend myself. And yet, defend myself and family I will. I don't know what it would be like living with the nightmare of having taken another's life to save my own, but I do know that living without having the God-given liberty and freedom to protect and defend myself from a deranged monster would be a far worse nightmare.

I ask for legislation that will help the mentally helpless, educate our children and adults to understand that how we spend our time has a great effect on who we are and how we behave. Put security guards in schools. Require background checks on all gun sale transactions. Enforce the laws that already exist. Increase the penalty for criminal use of firearms.

Honor the Second Amendment. There is much that can be done without taking away the right to bears arms in defense of self. Please, put emotion and fear aside and allow common sense and justice to prevail.

Barbara Hillis

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