



Testimony submitted to A Safer Connecticut Public Hearing on behalf of BCAC

Monday, January 28, 2013

My name is Mary Pat Healy, and I am representing the children and families of Bridgeport as the Executive Director of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition.

As many of you know, violence has unfortunately become an accepted part of our culture in this country. And, nowhere is that fact more evident than in Bridgeport. Bullying, child abuse, domestic violence and other crimes have become a daily appearance in many of our children's lives. And, guns have also become commonplace amongst some parts of our population.

This past year was a difficult one as Bridgeport was shocked by the shootings of a number of children, including the death of 15-year-old Keijahnae Robinson, who was sitting on her porch after a Sweet Sixteen party, and the shooting of 3-year old Katelin Gordon, who was being picked up from day care by her mother. These senseless shootings must stop. According to the Center for Disease Control and the Children's Defense Fund, the number of preschoolers killed by guns in 2008 (88) and in 2009 (85) was nearly double the number of law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty in 2008 (41) and 2009 (48).

In addition, since 1979, America has lost nearly three times as many children and teens to gunfire as the number of U.S. military personnel killed in action during the Vietnam War, and over 23 times the number of U.S. military personnel killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. We cannot, and should not, tolerate this continued assault on our most defenseless members of society.

WE ARE SUPPORTING THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA PUT FORTH BY Connecticut Against Gun Violence, which includes: a ban on high capacity ammunition magazines; a strengthening of assault weapons ban; requirement of permits and universal background checks on ALL sales and transfers of guns, making gun owners liable for negligent; a ban on the right of way for transportation of firearms and ammunition bought over the Internet; taxing ammunition sales and requirement of a license/permit to purchase any gun or ammunition; and restriction of handgun sales to one gun/month. We at the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition support all efforts to put common sense regulations in place to protect our children from further injury and death from guns.

This debate about gun safety has been ongoing for far too long. Yet, I remain hopeful that this year the debate will result in real action. As Frances Hodges Burnett wrote in the children's book *The Secret Garden* in 1911, "At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done – then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries ago." I hope we all look back on this time of action and have that same thought in the future.