



**Connecticut Conference  
United Church of Christ**

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**Testimony Submitted to the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and  
Children's Safety**

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Greetings to you from the members and ministers of the 241 congregations of the  
Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.

We offer you our prayers and encouragement as you take on the difficult task of developing  
policies and legislation that will reduce senseless shootings, gun violence, and the agonies of  
grief we have suffered in the wake of the tragedy in Newtown. Tears fell in all of our  
churches as the victims were remembered; pastors among us comforted stricken parents in  
the firehouse, organized prayer services within hours, and some stood before grieving friends  
and family to memorialize the dead.

Every year, some of our pastors and some of our colleagues in faith communities of all  
traditions do the same: stand before grieving friends and family to memorialize the dead, one  
who was struck down by a bullet from a gun. Connecticut has lost too many of its sons and  
daughters to gun violence.

In the next few weeks, both the General Assembly and the Governor's office take up the  
difficult and urgent questions of how we prevent these tragedies and these tears. As people of  
faith committed to the struggle against violence of all kinds, we know that there are no easy  
answers. What we do believe is that it is far too easy for people to kill each other.

In a civilized society, the human freedom we so earnestly cherish must be tempered by the  
common good. In our twenty-first century society, guns fail again and again to provide  
personal protection. Survey after survey has concluded that the more guns there are in our  
homes and businesses and places we gather, the higher the homicide rate.

For over twenty years the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ has been  
involved in helping to pass gun safety legislation in Connecticut. We are proud of our  
congregations' work in supporting the passage of the assault weapons ban, the gun seizure  
law, and strict requirements as to who cannot purchase and carry handguns. That work, as  
important as it is, was done over a decade ago.

In the wake of the Newtown shootings we believe additional legislation is required: to limit magazine capacity, to update the assault weapons ban, and to create a permitting process for long guns and ammunition. As leaders of faith communities, we pledge to foster a culture of peace and safety for all God's children: our members, our neighbors, and all those who sojourn with us here in Connecticut.

In addition to strengthening our gun safety laws, a sound policy solution must also include measures to make our schools safer for those who learn and those who teach there, and it must assure access to mental health care services for all citizens.

We place our trust in a God who “breaks the bow, and shatters the spear.” (Ps. 46:9) We believe in a God who heals the sick and restores the troubled mind. We hear the voice of a God who summons us to do the same: to give treatment to those afflicted with mental illness, and to take our weapons and lay them aside.

