

Dear Members of The Connecticut State Legislature,

As an educator, I was saddened but not surprised to find myself in a conversation with colleagues recently, during which time we learned that we had all, over the course of our careers, lost students to gun violence; that we had all found ourselves at pains to explain the empty seat in the classroom, hand over materials to a grieving family member, wonder what if anything we might have done.

I come from a long line of gun enthusiasts, professional weapons collectors, NRA leaders, and subsistence hunters and trappers. My position on gun violence prevention is not a popular one with many of them. Here's where we part ways: They do not associate the following deaths with the easy accessibility of firearms, but I do:

- My 14-year old cousin Willie, shot and killed while deer hunting with a friend who "thought he had the safety on"
- An off-duty police officer and family friend Tom, shot and killed when he interrupted an armed grocery store robbery
- My father's godson Peter, who excused himself from a Sunday family dinner, walked to his bedroom, and shot himself to death
- My friend Maria's mother, who climbed into her tub, wrapped her head in a towel, and shot herself in the mouth
- My classmate-since-kindergarten Mark, who shot himself in the head in the parking lot outside the Arts and Sciences building on our college campus
- My student Neil, who went home over Thanksgiving break during his first semester of college (and my first semester teaching) and shot himself to death

- My former student Ciara, a talented poet and a Newington police officer, shot to death by her ex-boyfriend, a CT state trooper who then turned the gun on himself

I urge you to keep in mind that gun violence touches our communities in many ways—not always with assault weapons, not always in public places, not always at the hands of strangers. We should not lose sight of the fact that people suffer the effects of gun violence in their homes, in their neighborhoods, by their own hands and by the hands of someone they know. Our reforms need to be comprehensive in that regard.

For 13 years, I have been married to a police officer here in Connecticut. I have grown accustomed to his bullet-proof vest; I am not unnerved when I see his service weapon strapped to his equipment belt. But there remains a nagging awareness of how necessary these items are and how dangerous his work and the work of his fellow officers is. It is not getting any safer. I am grateful that he and I share a commitment to reducing gun violence. We all have an obligation to ensuring the safety of our citizens, and our public trust has been placed in your hands.

While banning assault weapons and large capacity ammunition clips is a much-discussed and necessary step, this legislation does not go far enough. I would ask that you support all reasonable legislation on gun safety and preventing gun violence that comes before you, including background check and registration requirements, taxation, and liability measures for ownership and negligence.

I know it will take courage and much work to move these measures forward, and I thank you for your consideration and commitment.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Boquet
Milford, CT