

To those members of the Connecticut General Assembly assigned to the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety,

It is my pleasure to submit this testimony in regard to any future legislation regarding categorical bans on firearms based on their characteristics and bans on magazine capacity in response to the recent and terrible events at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. While the safety of Connecticut's children is an issue that should never be in question, I am unequivocally opposed to any measures that would seek to categorically ban certain types of firearms or ban magazines of any capacity.

While the acts of Adam Lanza are unthinkable, the fact remains that the vast majority of Connecticut residents use and enjoy the right bestowed upon them by the 2nd amendment of the Constitution to the United States and Section 15 of the First Article of the Connecticut Constitution without infringing upon the rights or safety of others. Such fact goes to the very heart of democracy, and the liberties and freedoms that we as Connecticut and United States citizens enjoy and cherish.

As a former United States Marine Corps Infantryman, current Connecticut Army National Guard Officer, lawyer, lifelong hunter and sportsman, I find it unabashedly naïve and unfair to limit my rights due to the terrible acts of a few, sick individuals. Without a doubt, gun violence is more a function of the individual operating the firearm than the firearm itself. As the cliché goes, limitations on characteristics of firearms and magazine capacity restrictions will only affect law-abiding citizens. A sick individual bent on destruction will find a way to accomplish his or her goal, regardless of any law against his or her behavior. The key word in the last sentence being "sick."

The safety of our schools and the prevention of gun violence is held not in the type of firearms or the capacity of the magazines available for sale to our citizens, but in the resources available to our families that have members that suffer from mental illness. Admittedly, strides can be made in improving the effectiveness and veracity of background checks required for firearms purchases. In addition, even more strides can be made in the funding and enforcement of the gun control laws that are currently in effect. However, categorical bans on certain types of firearms and restrictions on magazine capacity have proven to be not only ineffective, but unfairly restrictive to the majority of those who wish to purchase such firearms or magazines for self-defense, sporting purposes (both hunting and competition), and collectors – the vast majority of firearm owners.

Please, do not toe the party line, or support knee-jerk legislation to the terrible events at the Sandy Hook Elementary School that would historically prove to have no real effect on the safety of our schools or reduce gun violence. Please, support funding measures that would create better access to mental health treatment and better effectuate enforcement of the gun control laws that are already in place, and not infringe upon the vast majority of firearm owners in Connecticut who seek to enjoy the practical, and cherished rights bestowed upon them by their forefathers without fault for generations.

Very Respectfully,

1LT Erich J. Heinonen

