

My name is Ethan Rodriguez-Torrent. I grew up in Southbury and I'm currently a senior at Yale University in New Haven. I'm here to support the legislative proposals of Connecticut Against Gun Violence.

In the early morning hours of July 20 of last year, I was watching the midnight premier of the new Batman movie in Aurora, Colorado, when a shooter opened fire on the crowd. Twelve people died that night and another 58 were wounded, including the two friends who were with me. America is by far the most violent developed country in the world, and on that night and in the weeks and months that have followed, I saw the harsh reality behind the statistics. I have listened to a 14-year-old's 911 call from the theater as she tried desperately to hear the operator's instructions on how to give CPR to her 6-year-old cousin, Veronica. I met Veronica's extended family in the hospital the day after, as they grappled with the question of when to tell Veronica's mother, Ashley, that her daughter didn't make it. Ashley herself suffered a miscarriage and was paralyzed from the waist down during the shooting. I have watched my friend Petra, an intelligent and musically gifted young woman, struggle to string coherent sentences together after a projectile entered her brain.

You've heard from experts today. You probably already know that 100 Connecticut residents die to guns a year, and almost ten times that number are injured. I've already described what those injuries can entail. So now I'm just going to talk about the other side of the problem we're faced with. Here are a few things that you should be thinking about during this legislative session.

#1. In Connecticut today, *anyone* can legally buy an AR-15, like the one used at Aurora or the one used at Newtown, without having to pass a background check to find out whether that person is dangerously mentally ill, a former felon, or a convicted domestic abuser. Do we really want to be handing out semiautomatic rifles to these populations? If not, then this loophole needs to be closed, period.

#2. A few days ago, I went online to [www.armslist.com](http://www.armslist.com), an online marketplace like Craigslist where ordinary people post items for sale and then meet up to make the transaction in person. I found multiple listings in and around New Haven, from handguns to semiautomatic rifles. Literally anyone can list a firearm for sale. All I would have to do is contact the seller, meet him at his house or on a street corner, and pay his asking price. No background check, no permit – nothing. How can we enforce our background check and permit systems if we allow just anyone to hop online and circumvent everything with a single click? If we want to enforce the laws we already have, we need to make it *illegal* for any web site to make *or* facilitate a gun or ammo sale in Connecticut, except through licensed gun shops.

#3. It's not just about the mass shootings. It's also about the shootings that occur every few days in cities and towns across Connecticut. Most of these shootings are committed by criminals who acquired their guns illegally. And guns, like *any* controlled or illegal item, are trafficked in bulk. There are numerous examples of this, including the case of

James Nigel Bostic in New York, who bought handguns in quantities as high as 80 and resold them to gang members on the streets of Buffalo. If you really want to help keep handguns out of the hands of killers in Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport, then you need to restrict handgun sales to one per month. No law-abiding citizen needs more than that to defend himself.

There are more proposals on the table than the three I've mentioned; unfortunately I don't have time to address them all. I'm also not going to sit here and say that better gun laws are a cure-all that will *eliminate* violence from our state. But it is blindingly obvious to me that many aspects of our current gun policy – or lack thereof – just facilitate crime and lead to deaths that are both horrifying and, tragically, preventable. Safer gun laws are now overdue.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have for me.