

Dear Committee Members,

I ask you to focus on mental health and school security and NOT on easy window dressing in the form of gun restrictions on law abiding citizens. Decades ago, I learned both firearms responsibility and marksmanship with my father, using his WWII era M1 carbine rifle. That semi-auto rifle happens to use standard (not "high capacity") 15 and 30 round magazines. The civilian AR-15 has been **on sale to and in common use by Americans** since the early 1960s with standard 20 and 30 round magazines.

"Assault Weapon" is a made up and politically motivated term. Contestants in the Camp Perry competition of the civilian marksmanship program (that compete for spots in the "Presidents 100") each year shoot almost exclusively with civilian AR-15 rifles. 2011 FBI statistics show just how misplaced attention on these rifles is. Rifles, in total, account for less than 3% of homicides with the AR-15 accounting for a small fraction of that 3%. Working to pass legislation, that will not stop criminals or the deranged, is dangerously misguided because attention is unhelpfully focused in the wrong place and **creates a false sense of security**. Also according to FBI statistics, the **violent crime and murder rates in the US are down by 50% in the last 20 years**. Coincidentally or not, this has happened at a time when gun rights, including civilian concealed carry, have expanded significantly. There is no epidemic of violent crime as the media seems intent on selling. Gun control advocates habitually refer to gun statistics that include suicide. The use of these statistics is a diversion given that US rates of suicide are comparable with other developed countries and suicide is not what people are primarily concerned with in this debate.

Mental health and armed school security need to be the focus. Near instant response with the ability to deploy debilitating deadly force is required to stop a deranged individual intent on harm. As a parent of an elementary school student a Stamford public school, I was as touched as anyone by the recent horrific tragedy. However, in the midst of mourning with the country, I was dismayed by the misplaced focus on guns and the decision of our community to waste resources on unarmed security guards. If budgets allow, police should be considered. If not and/or in addition, legally permitted armed staff and volunteers should be allowed on school grounds. I am sure there are capable parents and grandparents (including retired police officers) that would give of their time freely to help with kids and have the capacity to act as a first line of response and defense to the kind of threat in question. I would personally be happy to commit \$1,000 a year directly to costs associated with armed security as well as school employee training and permitting at any school my child attends. I believe 600 teachers applied for free firearms training in Ohio.

I actually do think that many gun control advocates have good intentions and have their hearts in the right place. Unfortunately they tend to be uneducated about guns, misguided, and are driven by emotion rather than reason. We have plenty of gun laws. Please focus on enforcing existing laws as well as **addressing clearly identified holes in mental health and school security**. Doing that will actually **make my child more safe**.

Earnestly,

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