

Gun Violence Prevention Working Group Public Hearing
Monday, January 28th, 2013
Legislative Office Building
10:00am, Room 2C
Testimony of Kimberly Oryell

Senator Loony, Representative Miner and Distinguished members of the Gun Violence Working Group Task Force, my name is Kimberly Oryell and I am here today to testify in regards to Gun Violence Prevention. For the record I am the former president for Survivors of Homicide and currently work as a group facilitator. However, the statements I am about to make are those of my own feelings and should not be construed as the opinions of all Survivors of Homicide.

My beloved uncle, Jerry Barnette was murdered outside of his business in North Carolina on September 11, 2003. The suspected offender was a convicted felon several times over. That being said, the gun he used to kill my uncle, which has never been recovered, could not have been his own legal property. My Uncle Jerry, a legal gun owner, did have a gun on him at the time of his murder, however because he was shot in the dark from across a parking lot, he was unfortunately unable to fire back before a bullet penetrated his heart. Although he could not protect himself in this murder, I believe whole heartedly that had he seen the offender, he would have been able to do so.

I, like all victims of violence know something needs to be done so that senseless tragedies, like the one in Newtown can be prevented; however, I am here today to ask you to examine all the facts before you react. Giving into public outcry for change with a knee-jerk reaction to this tragedy with no real clear understanding of core issues that lead unspeakable mass murder, such as the one at Sandy Hook Elementary, to keep happening simply because this tragedy occurred in our backyard could very much set us up for failure. The entire country is looking at Connecticut and how we are pioneering the gun control debate and legislation, thus we need to be a role model for them to base their own proposed legislation on.

First and foremost, we all know it is against the law to kill another human being, yet time and time again we hear about another act of violence that could have and should have been prevented by individuals who obviously have no regard for the law. You need to determine and provide clear statement on how would banning magazine capacity or increasing the tax to 50% or even publishing the names of all permit holders would honestly help to keep us safer. I have serious doubts as to the effectiveness of some of the proposed solutions because those who are looking to commit mass destruction or ordinary street crimes are not going to obtain their weaponry via conventional means. If you ban assault rifles and magazine capacity, potential other threats of mass murder also need to be identified and a plan put in place to limit the risk. Without doing so, I fear a far scarier weapon will soon follow thus leaving fewer survivors than victims in subsequent events.

Mass Murder is not the only epidemic we have to face head on. Let us not forget about ordinary street crime that is also occurring on a daily basis. Many of the mass murders are completed by those who

legally bought a gun because they had no criminal history and passed a background check. Street crime however is most usually committed by those who had a previous criminal offense and did not obtain their weapon through legal means as in the case where a convicted ex-convict shot my uncle in a dark parking lot. I ask this task force to not simply focus on how to prevent mass murders, but also the countless cases that occur in front of our homes and make leaving work a hazardous activity. No violence is acceptable in my book.

Mental health must be considered in great length to prevent further tragedies such as Sandy Hook. Let this horrific tragedy be a lesson to us and understand that while those with mental illness have rights, we have the responsibility to not just protect the innocent public from these individuals, but to also protect the individual from themselves. Those with a history of mental illness should not be allowed to obtain a permit to own a firearm nor live in a home where they are accessible.

The key to ending mass murder is to be able to identify the individuals who possess the traits as seen in so many of the recent cases and prevent the thought of the act to even be entertained by the individual before it's too late.

I believe all firearms and ammunition purchases should require a permit to purchase, even at trade and gun shows. To say hand guns should be subject to scrutiny but rifles should not is absurd. If a weapon can shoot a bullet, then it will be deadly in the wrong hands. I also believe that the required NRA classes one must take to earn a permit should be re-evaluated. I, as a hairstylist by trade, was required to learn the state and federal regulations and pass an exam in order to obtain my license, however, to obtain a pistol permit, the students are not required to learn them pertaining to their sport. This change could educate a potential permit holder of the responsibility that comes with owning a firearm. It would show them the procedures they must follow to gift or sell their weapons. It will teach them how to properly store their inventory so that their children or other individuals cannot gain access to them. It will also outline the penalties for each infraction. The laws are searchable and can be easily accessed, however I wonder how many permit holders learned them to begin with or attempted to obtain a copy after the fact. It is very dangerous and irresponsible to hand guns over to ignorant permit holders.

I would like you to consider banning on-line sales of firearms. When one purchases a gun on line, it must be mailed to a dealer so that a background check can be done. That is a good start, however allowing on line sales provides these already anti-social entities to purchase these "weapons of mass destruction" with complete anonymity. There would be no way to regulate how many guns or ammunition one could stockpile if they are shopping different sites and sending them to different dealers. The more human contact a deranged person must have with others, the less likely they are to purchase the weapon to begin with.

In closing, I would like to thank you, as a Survivor of Homicide, for listening to both sides of the issue and taking this seriously enough to attend today's public hearing and focus your attention to what is becoming an unacceptable epidemic. I simply request you to look at all the reasons these particular events are happening and diagnose the core and common reason that is present in all of these cases. I have always supported sensible gun legislation, closing the loopholes that allow CRIMINALS to get

access to firearms. I do not want this task force or the CT state legislature to create laws that will not be effective thus not leaving us safer. Sandy Hook was an indescribable tragedy and it hit home. Let this tragic event be a lesson to us. I ask you to create SENSIBLE legislation that will indeed make a difference. If you de-arm the good guys like my Uncle Jerry; that will not prevent the bad guys who have no regard for law to obtain them. Failing is not an option. We must honor those angels taken from us too soon by doing it right the first time.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.