

January 30, 2013

Thank you for holding these hearings.

I am parent of a Sandy Hook School third grader. I am also a neighbor of Adam Lanza. He likely drove past our house on December 14<sup>th</sup>, car loaded with assault weapons and ammunition to murder 20 beautiful children and 6 beloved educators at our elementary school.

In the days after the tragedy, my friends who lost children asked us “Did you know the Lanzas?” And I feel guilty. I feel that somehow I should have known my neighbor had an arsenal of weapons designed for mass murder. I should have known there was a mentally unstable young man in that home. I should have known that our wonderful school had no defense against such a man, armed in such a way. If I had only known . . . .

The guilt. The grief. It is soul shattering.

Yet, it is not really our *personal* responsibility to know these things and protect our children, our friends and our teachers from this type of violence. It is a *collective* responsibility to protect all citizens – a responsibility for our government to have public safety laws in place and effective enforcement of those laws.

We can, as a society, help determine if a person is responsible enough for gun ownership – by having thorough background checks for all gun purchases.

We can, as society, be certain that there are no assault weapons in our neighborhoods by banning assault weapons and the large capacity magazines that make them so deadly. These guns are not for hunting or home protection. They are offensive weapons designed for mass casualties and they have no purpose in our communities.

We can, as a society, can help people with mental illnesses and their families get the help they need.

We can, as a society, do more to prevent mass shootings. Columbine and Aurora were unheeded warnings. We never thought it could happen in our own town. And yet, here we are. In Sandy Hook.

Honor these victims. Do the right thing. If not now, when? There are common sense solutions. We cannot let this happen again. No community should ever again face these questions, this guilt, this pain.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kristin Larson

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