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Thank you Legislative Leaders; Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey (D-Hamden), House Republican Leader Larry Cafero (R-Norwalk), Senate President Donald E. Williams Jr., (D-Brooklyn), Senate Republican Leader John McKinney (R-Fairfield), House Majority Leader Joe Aresimowicz (D-Berlin) and Senate Majority Leader Martin M. Looney (D-New Haven) and GUN VIOLENCE SUB COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Sen. Martin Looney, Co-chair, Rep. Craig Miner, Co-chair, Sen. Eric Coleman, Sen. John Fonfara, Sen. Scott Frantz, Sen. Tony Guglielmo, Sen. Joan Hartley, Sen. John Kissel, Sen. Kevin Witkos, Rep. Dan Carter, Rep. Stephen Dargan, Rep. Gerald Fox III, Rep. Janice Giegler, Rep. Bob Godfrey Rep. Rosa Rebimbas, Rep. Toni Walker for this opportunity to submit my testimony.

I Begin by Asking Which Right Is More Important? Right to Life? Right to Bear Arms? I think if positioned this way everyone would agree that the Right to Life is our ultimate Right.

As a parent and a member of the Newtown community, I believe that it is everyone's responsibility; citizens, parents, students, health professionals, law enforcement, advocacy groups and you as our legislators, to work together to prevent gun violence in our schools and in our communities. We need to put aside our differences, let go of our fears and develop common sense solutions.

I urge you to stand up to the extremists; do not allow them to define this debate. This should not be an argument about which side will win or lose. This is about everyone's Right to Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness which is what our country was built on. Many argue common sense solutions impinge on some of our other individual rights but nothing is more important or sacred than one's right to live.

Different rights will inevitably conflict. Sometimes one person exercising his rights conflicts with others exercising their rights. The right to practice one's religion in the U.S. does not include the right to kill someone for human sacrifice. The right to life is more important. The right to bear arms does trump the right to life. Yet people bearing arms take 30,000 lives a year in the US. This must stop.

I applaud the work that you are doing to take important steps towards this goal. I support legislation that includes tighter gun laws, improved school security (with an effort to keep our children in an open and creative environment) and steps to improve mental and social health in our communities.

As a citizen and parent I propose the following solutions to prevent gun violence:

Gun Laws

- Mandatory gun users education that includes a safety class and shooting license test (similar to driver's license)
- A ban on high capacity ammunition magazines (no grandfathering)
- A strengthening of assault weapons ban (no grandfathering) and a ban on all semi-automatic weapons
- Requirement of permits and universal background checks on ALL sales and transfers of guns
- Requirement of registration of handguns with annual renewal

- Requirement of annual fee and annual background check for all handguns owned
- Requirement that the owner stipulate that the guns are still in their possession or explain how the gun was transferred to another person; require safety inspection every three years
- Make gun owners liable for negligent storage if any person gains access to firearms and injures himself or another person or causes damage to property - the violation would be a Class D felony
- A ban on the right of way for transportation of firearms and ammunition bought over the Internet
- Taxing ammunition sales and requirement of a license/permit to purchase/and or use any gun or ammunition; restriction of quantity of handgun sales and ammunition sales on monthly basis.
- Limits to gun ownership in families with mental health or depression history.

In addition to gun laws we must look at other areas that lead to these horrific mass killings. I support the following initiatives to address mental and social health as well as school safety.

Mental and Social Health

- Guidance classes that deal with violence, dealing with anger, emotional well-being. (similar to DARE). Teach children how to resolve problems without anger and violence.
- Support for parents of children and young adults that are showing signs of unhealthy behavior.
- Better mental health identification in our schools.
- More support for citizens dealing with mental health issues.
- Stricter laws on violent movies and video games.
- Improve the mental health process and system in our state.

School Safety

- Create environments in schools where students and faculty are comfortable reporting behavior that is suspicious or indications of plans for violence.
- All schools should have security systems including cameras.
- All schools should have lock down plans in place.
- One police officer in each school that also teaches kids about violence prevention.
- Teachers should have emergency panic button lanyard linked to the police station.

I believe that the initiatives of this task force should be the first step in making changes in our state and in our society. We need to continue to talk about why our culture is so enamored with violence and guns. I know that people's background and experiences form their opinions on this emotional issue. But for those who believe they can only be happy with automatic weapons, I would hope they can find an alternative. There are so many amazing things in the world; surely there must be something else that can fulfill them. If not, I would point out that we are only guaranteed the pursuit of happiness, not necessarily its achievement. But life and liberty are guaranteed. Taking someone's life in pursuit of your happiness is not acceptable.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Lisa Berger