

Madam Chair or Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lois Schaffer, a resident of Great Neck, a suburb of Nassau County, New York and a victim of gun violence.

Four years ago, December 16, 2008 to be exact, our daughter, Susan Schaffer whom we called "Susie" was murdered. Susie was a 48-year-old single working mother who was shot as she walked into her home with groceries interrupting a burglary in progress by two 17-year-old thugs who had a stolen gun as the result of rampaging other homes in Susie's neighborhood. It must also be noted that our daughter was cognizant of the consequences of guns and would not permit her children to even own a water gun.

I have always supported gun control as a citizen, a constituent of my Assemblywoman, Michelle Schimel, who has worked tirelessly on gun control and a member of the non-profit organization New Yorkers Against Gun Violence. I am even more passionately involved because of our personal tragedy.

Gun violence has escalated since four years ago when our daughter was murdered. It's become a daily occurrence. The day after the Arizona tragedy in January 2011, New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg stated: "Thirty-four Americans are murdered—every single day. Tomorrow there will be another 34. And so it will continue..."

It's ludicrous to think that shampoo is being confiscated at airports, yet concealed weapons are permitted, gun trafficking continues, assault weapons are purchased on a multiple basis at gun shows...no background check,... no questions asked.

This is America. Supposedly a humane society. Yet we witness tragic deaths daily due to gun violence. It must change. Shooting animals for sustenance may be acceptable, yet the preservation of human life must be taken into account as well. The Second Amendment has been twisted to fit the needs of the conglomerate who work hand in hand: gun lobbyists, the manufacturers and the NRA.

I could go on and on: The Kennedys, Martin Luther King, John Lennon, Allard Lowenstein, the husband of Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (who ran and was elected on the gun control issue) Tucson, Gabrielle Gifford, Judge John Roll, Christina Taylor Green, Virginia Tech, Fort Hood, Texas, Aurora, Colorado, Columbine and now the most horrendous tragedy of all: 20 innocent 6-year-old children in addition to 7 adults massacred by a maniac here in Connecticut...and to add to it the responding firefighters who were murdered 10 days later on Christmas eve.

Four years ago, I told my Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel and the staff at New Yorkers Against Gun Violence that we have witnessed so many deaths due to gun violence, whether it was a single death or massacre. I added that there would be a horrific event that would finally initiate action by our Nation. That day occurred on December 14th in Newtown Connecticut. Newtown has impacted the world in everyone's gut and heart. This is moment. This is the time for change.

As the result of our tragedy, I began writing a manuscript which will hopefully be published soon. The purpose for the work is to "put a face" on gun violence, raise people's consciousness (which has now been tragically accomplished) to be used as a vehicle to speak as a victim about tragic losses such as our family experienced, the affects of the loss on the survivors and a groundswell for change on this grave and societal issue.

Change has finally begun in New York State. I take pride as a New York resident to acknowledge Governor Cuomo's New York Safe Act who signed a sweeping package of gun control measures. It's the first state to pass gun legislation since the massacre in Newtown. Let Connecticut be the second.

The New York Safe Act tightens the state's assault weapons ban, reduces the maximum size of the ammunition magazines, from 10 rounds to 7, strengthens permit requirements for firearms, requires background checks for all gun sales, including private sellers and buyers, mandates that clinicians in mental health report patients whom they consider a threat to commit suicide, whose guns and permits are then mandated to be confiscated, creates a state-wide gun data base that would prevent public accessibility.

The above legislation has pitfalls such as permitting 7 rounds of ammunition instead of 10 because just one bullet can be lethal. But it's a step in the right direction. Please use New York as a beacon and pass new gun laws to keep all persons and our children safe. I hope Connecticut's legislature will initiate change politically, but more important for the preservation of humanity.