

To: Gun Violence Prevention Working Group

By: Rev. Barbara Fast, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, Ct.

Date: Testimony Submitted January 28 2013

Re: Recommendations to Reduce Gun Violence

I am the Rev. Barbara Fast I serve the UU Congregation of Danbury, Ct. I reside in Greenwich, Ct. Mr. Chairmen and members of this committee:

I am here seeking to reduce gun violence, as I know you do as well and I urge this body to adopt gun regulations that will reduce gun violence and provide greater safety to our children and the people of Ct. Specifically, I support the legislative agenda proposed by Ct. Against Gun Violence.

I am testifying on my own behalf. I have offered care to those who felt hurt because of the tragic mass shooting in Newtown. Many members of my congregation live in Newton and some are educators and professionals in the public schools in the area. No one from UU Danbury was killed in the tragic mass shooting of Dec 14th, but some grieve the loss of a friend or a colleague. Many worry for their children. We all feel this deeply.

I also speak to you as someone who worked for four years as an Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan. I have some experience in how gun violence harms people and communities in cities. Its true cost is really incalculable. Policies need to be enacted that will reduce incidents of gun violence. Some critical public policy goals should include:

A ban on the sale of extreme weapons such as the assault rifle the AR 15 used in the school shooting and their ammunition;

The creation of Universal background checks (closing of loopholes in back ground check requirements);

The registration of hand guns; and,

The creation of gun licensing requirements. We require that drivers to pass tests before we provide a driver's license.

After the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School we had a healing service in the congregation. Children & adults put stars on a bare Christmas tree. On those stars were our deep wishes for the coming year. Many read simply Peace or Love or Healing. One had a child's name on it, with this. *"Rest in peace, I love you: 12 14 12."* Another was a wish for *"peace and healing for the families of Newtown"*. One child wrote, *"A father is sad today because his son won't come home."*; another wrote, *"I wish 'humons' can go back in time."* Most likely an adult wrote this: *"I wish for our friends in Sandy Hook to find peace and for children all over the world to be loved cherished respected and protected."* So do we all. I will end with this wish that was placed upon the healing tree; *"Give us gun laws that work, please!"*

Respectfully submitted, *Rev. Barbara Fast*

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My work is loving the world... Are my boots old? Is my coat torn? Am I no longer
young, and still not half-perfect? Let me keep my mind on what matters..

from *Messenger*, by Mary Oliver