

Dear Members of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety,

I'd like to start off by thanking each of you for traveling to our community and for taking the time to carefully listen to the testimony our town wants to share with you on this issue!

My name is Robin Riley and I'm the mom of 5 beautiful children who all attended Sandy Hook school. My youngest son Zachary was at Sandy Hook Elementary School on the morning of 12/14/12. He's in 3rd grade which is located in the back of the school and where he would've been that day with his class if he didn't have learning disabilities. For reasons unknown to his classroom teacher, she rushed Zachary and another child out of the classroom that morning, *she said, "normally I'm late getting them out the door"* to head to the front of the building where the two Special Ed Reading rooms are located. His reading classroom is almost directly across the hall from the two 1st grade classrooms deeply affected by the terrible tragedy that morning. If my son didn't get to his reading room when he did, he most likely would've come face to face with the crazed gunman!

[\(Our first blessing that morning\)](#)

Zachary entered the reading room and his classmate entered the other. Right behind him was a reading teacher who would be working with him that morning since his regular reading teacher was in a meeting a few doors down with our heroic principal and school psychologist! His reading teacher told him she was going across the hall to the other reading room to get the stuff she needed to work with him that morning. As she entered the doorway, shots were fired, she turned around, closed the door, shut the lights off and grabbed my little guy and the two of them entered the small bathroom located up against the hallway wall in the classroom. [\(Our second blessing that morning\)](#) *Zack's teacher told us if the shooting began seconds later, my little guy would've been alone in the reading classroom. Knowing my child, he definitely would have entered the hallway to see what was going on and most likely been killed by the crazed gunman, who was shooting his way down the same hall to the classrooms!*

Zack and his teacher sat on the floor in the dark for 20 to 30 minutes in sheer terror, afraid their life would end that day! They huddled close together as my son

asked her if it was bad guys! She told him she didn't know but when he asked again a few seconds later, she told him, yes, I think it is! My son responded with, **“Why Can't Super Heroes Be Real”** I ask you to think about his response when making your decisions. You can all be “Super Heroes” by making the right decisions so other children don't have to experience what my son and so many others did on 12/14/12! Show the children of the United States of America that people like you can be REAL Super Heroes, Heroes who go the extra mile to make a difference! **I ask you to please be his voice!**

My son, who just turned 9 a few weeks before this horrific tragedy was terrified he would die that morning! He told me he thought it was the end and he thought he was going to die! When he saw his teacher bless herself, since we were not Catholic, Zachary asked her to teach him how to bless himself and they proceeded with the blessing together while sitting in the dark and hearing extremely loud, rapid gunfire, hundreds of rounds! Screaming and crying echoed at the same time just feet away! Zachary told me he wanted to cry and scream but remained quiet because he was afraid the bad guys would hear him and find them! On 12/14/12 my little boy lost his innocence, he heard and saw horror which no child should ever experience, especially a child living in the greatest Country on earth! Although he needed and had to be brave in hopes of surviving that morning, he did what was right and stayed quiet. I ask you all to do the same! Please be brave, don't give in, stand up to the NRA and Gun Lobbyist to make my sons voice count in your decisions! It's not okay that my son's innocence was taken from him the morning of 12/14! I don't want to explain to him in the future that what happened to him didn't matter enough and that's why it happened again!
I ask you to please be his voice!

Zachary survived that horrific morning, but in being so lucky, he now has to live a life remembering all he heard and saw that tragic morning! At his young age, he was led out of the building past his beloved school principal and caring school psychologist who he'd just started working with weeks before on self-esteem issues related to his learning disabilities. Although he was told to keep his eyes closed, as he relates more, we know he did open them at some point. As soon as he was safely home that day, he confided in me that he tripped over a foot on the way out of the school. He hasn't shared all, but when he does speak of it, his little face is filled with such anguish! **I ask you to please be his voice!**

Please realize we know how blessed we are that our little boy came home that day and he didn't lose his life! (Our 3rd blessing that day) We know if the gunman chose the classrooms on the other side of the hallway, our son would probably not be home with us today! Please also remember the terror and guilt that will live with him for the rest of his life! Although he is only 9, he told me last week that 3rd graders are bigger than 1st graders and they're supposed to protect them because they are little! He also told his teacher during the shooting they could go out and attack the bad guys so I know he's dealing with survivor's guilt and he's only a young child himself! **I ask you to please be his voice!**

Weeks have past and life has gone on but for my son, my family, my school and my community it has not! The pain will never go away! Things will never be the same for any of us, for any of our children so I plead with you to do the right thing! **I ask you to please be our voice!**

Pass the necessary laws to ban semi-automatic weapons, high capacity magazines and bullets meant to cause the most damage on impact to human life! They're all meant for one thing only and that is to kill as many people in the quickest way possible, Its Mass Murdering! I also agree with universal background checks, making sure there are no loopholes for gun shows or online purchasing. Another area which concerns me is the fact that just because someone is stable and not a threat to society when purchasing a gun, magazine and/or bullets this can change at any time. Life can be difficult and people change due to events which occur in their lives, so you may have a responsible gun owner one day and a crazed gunman the next! Life happens and for some, it may be peaches and cream, but for many, life is filled with trials and tribulations and sometimes this changes a person! How many times have we all heard, he/she was the sweetest/nicest person, no way could they be involved, just to find out they were really involved or committed a heinous crime! This is one of the many reasons why military type weapons, including large capacity magazines and massive tissue damaging bullets need to be banned! Please get these weapons out of the hands of civilians! **I ask you to please be my voice!**

Please don't let our 26 angels; Dawn, Mary, Ann Marie, Vicki, Lauren, Rachel, Daniel, Emilie, Dylan, Catherine, Jesse, Grace, Jack, Madeleine, Chase, Josephine,

Avielle, James, Olivia, Noah, Allison, Caroline, Jessica, Benjamin, Charlotte, and Ana's loss of life be in vein! **I ask you to please be their voice!**

For the families who lost their loved ones, nothing can bring them back but you can make sure you make the right decisions for the pain caused by yes an unstable man, but one who was using weapons that cause mass destruction!

I ask you to please be their voice!

For the children who survived in those two first grade classrooms, the bravery and courage those 6 and 7 year olds showed the morning of 12/14/12 is the courage I hope you all show when standing up and not succumbing to the gun lobbyist's demands! **I ask you to please be their voice!**

For my son, all the children of Sandy Hook school and their families please remember how this has impacted them, they've had to adjust to changes that were forced on them, and so, I believe adults will do just fine with adjusting to changes in gun laws! **I ask you to please be their voice!**

For our wonderful teachers and staff who protected our children and who continue to care & love them every day! **I ask you to please be their voice!**

I have a saying on my wall that reads: "Common sense is very uncommon" Please use common sense when making these decisions. I believe our Founding Fathers would be disappointed in the mass murdering of our children because of a law made over 200 years ago! I agree, citizens should have the right to exercise their second amendment rights, but they can do it without the need for military style guns, magazines and ammo! **I ask you to please be my voice!**

I feel confident in all of you making the right decisions! I'm confident you'll stand up to the NRA and not let them dictate the outcome of this debate! I'm confident campaign contributions won't dictate your decisions either! I have faith in all of you to do the right thing! **I ask you to please be my voice!**

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony! **I hope you will be our voice!**

Sincerely, Robin Riley