

Ryan Knapp testimony to state committee hearing January 30th, 2013:

As a Sandy Hook Elementary alum, Sandy Hook resident and concerned constituent, I urge you to please refocus your attention from firearms legislation and towards mental health. When President Obama came to this school, he promised an all encompassing approach to preventing future mass murders. Firearms legislation addresses “**how**” the murders occurred, but the bigger concern should be the “**why**” in this scenario. Blaming firearms is a superficial and ineffective way of dealing with the fear we are collectively feeling through reactionary legislation.

Even in a hypothetical situation where all firearms were removed from existence, these deranged people would still be out there with the same issues left to find other ways for their impulses to manifest: arson, bombings, poisonings, etc.

What should be most telling is the fact that this happened just over a mile from Fairfield Hills, a former State Mental Hospital that had programs to treat the likes of the Sandy Hook murderer. The State cut funding to this hospital. This was the type of hospital where the murderer could have gotten 24 hour supervision and treatment.

In a story from The Newtown Bee, ran in October of 2012, former employee of Fairfield Hills and Registered Nurse discussed the adolescent unit and what happened to the patients who were removed from its care. I'd like to read an excerpt below:

"A lot of the young people were there for depression, or because they were trying to hurt themselves," she said. She considers the adolescent program to have been highly successful. "I still see some of my patients around, and they're doing well now," she said.

Closing Fairfield State Hospital was the "grand idea" of the state. "Some became homeless", she said, "and others turned to crime, or became violent and ended up at Garner Prison. Why did it have to be all or nothing? Why did it have to either be open or closed?"

Again, this is the type of program that the Sandy Hook murderer should have been in, but the state cut it. Federal privacy laws protected the shooter from being institutionalized against his wishes. That means that his mother could have carried him on her insurance until he was 26, but had no say in the treatment she was paying for.

I don't believe any children are born evil, or that there is one defining event that made them such, but rather a combination of events over time that leads to a corruption of values and reason. I think we are setting children up to have problems. Texting causing children to have a lack of interpersonal skill. Social media has all but eliminated privacy, putting undue pressure on people because they constantly feel as though they are being compared to their peers. Television has been giving people unrealistic expectations about life and how to get ahead. Instilling a desire to be in the spotlight and seek attention

in young people. Violent video games and movies teach young adults that shoot outs are exciting. We set kids for dramatic falls and when their worlds are so small, it's easy to shatter it.

We as a society don't want to face these issues. For example, if you were to poll all the parents of students who graduated with the mass-murderer, how many would say "yes, my son or daughter teased and ridiculed him. Ignored and excluded him. Right here in this school." No one in town would admit to that. But I guarantee it's statistically higher than that.

These murderers target those who are helpless to defend themselves. It's a power trip where cowards prey on the weak and innocent. That's why they usually take their own lives when met with the first semblance of resistance. But rather than identify and address mentally ill individuals, you want to curtail the rights of citizens and turn them into potential victims by restricting their rights to defend themselves. ... That is called "enabling."

I am terrified of the mentally ill amongst us who go untreated and plot to carry out future mass murders. Rather than address how to find and treat those people, our elected officials seem determined to take away my means of defending myself from said mass murders.

I hope my words have some impact on your future legislative decisions.

Thank you for your time.