

Anger was my first reaction following the news of Newtown. How could 26 people have been murdered in a school with a semi-automatic weapon here in Connecticut, a state with some of the strictest gun and public safety laws in the country?

This is my home state. I grew up in Wallingford, worked in Meriden, North Haven, Cheshire, and lived in New Haven. Six years ago, I settled in Danbury, after living in New York City and overseas. I have always taken pride in being from here, that Connecticut was a safe, decent place to live, filled-with and governed-by reasonable people.

While working as a reporter at the Meriden Record-Journal at the time of the Virginia Tech shooting, I spoke with State Rep. Mike Lawlor, of East Haven, for an article. He told me that the Virginia Tech incident could not have happened in Connecticut exactly as such because no one could have acquired those weapons or ammunition legally, for starters. I rested a little easier after hearing that, believing that Connecticut has always been at the forefront of public safety. Recently, I read that Connecticut is one of only 2 states in the country that require carbon monoxide detectors in schools. I wasn't surprised by this; it was another reassurance that this state took care of its own.

And then Newtown happened. A bloody, horrific obliteration of our friends and neighbors with a legally acquired weapon. So, initially I was very angry. And that was before learning that one of the children killed, Madeline Hsu, 6, was a former preschool classmate of my 4-year-old daughter. We went to Maddie's birthday party this past spring; I see her mother and sister each time I pick my child up from school. Anger turned to profound, bottomless grief.

When did assault weapons become legal here? How? Why? I think I speak for most everyone when I say we all feel deep shame over this.

We must move forward and fix things now. This testimony is part of a pledge I made on December 14 to myself and to beautiful, 6-year old Maddie: I will not stop working on this until order, safety and decency is restored in this state.

Connecticut's gun control laws need to be upgraded and tightened. As a resident and voter, I urge you to pass everything on the proposed bill from Connecticut Against Gun Violence. You, our elected, state lawmakers, have the power to act and the moral obligation to do so. Restore the sense of public safety and well-being for Connecticut residents and honor the legacy of those killed, the caring adults and the little kids whose families chose to raise them here, who chose to make this state their home.

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