

Good afternoon. My name is Tom Maurath. My wife Daryl Zang and I were both raised in Newtown and along with our two sons and ten other immediate family members, we have called Newtown our home for nearly 40 years.

I am here today, along with my community to say that the horrific tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School can never be allowed to happen again. I am also here today to share my observations from Monday's public hearing in Hartford. It is important to thank this task force and recognize their commitment to the job at hand.

For those in the audience that could not attend, this task force listened to over 16 ½ hours of testimony from literally thousands of CT residents. I know this because I was unlucky enough to pick the 3rd to last lottery ticket to testify

The Newtown community here tonight needs to know that the overwhelming majority of Monday's testimonies were from staunch opponents against any type of new gun control laws. What I witnessed was a large contingent that was well-organized and well versed in their interpretation of the 2nd amendment. They are resolute in their message against almost all of the proposed gun control bills. What I did not witness was any significant message of compromise. In fairness, 100% of the testimonials did include sincere and heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families.

While nothing can bring the 20 beautiful children and 6 heroic teachers back to their families, we are obligated as a responsible society to turn this tragic act of gun violence into a true catalyst for change.

I am a gun owner, but this tragedy is a "tipping point" and it demands the following legislative changes:

1. It is time to ban all assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines.
2. It is time to require permits and universal background checks on new sales, resale and transfers of firearms.
3. It is time to make gun owners liable for negligent storage if any person gains access and commits a crime.

It is the responsibility of all Connecticut parents, citizens and elected officials to take action to make sure this never happens again. Unfortunately, without clear and decisive action, it is not a question of

“if”; it is a question of “when” another gun massacre will occur in our country. If we do not take action to change our guns laws and implement them with 100% conviction, then our complacency will be to blame when this happens again in another community.

School is not the only place our children go. We cannot expect to have armed guards at every sports field, ballet class, Boy Scout meeting or library story hour. We can, however, commit to taking sensible action to keep our children out of harm’s way.

I ask this legislative committee, along with the unconditional support of your constituents, to simply do the right thing. As our elected officials, you need to act now to pass the most comprehensive legislation in the nation. Connecticut needs to lead our country with committed actions to prevent gun violence in order to keep all our communities safe. Thank you.