

Good Afternoon,

I would like to thank Chairs Gerratana and Johnson, Vice chairs Slossberg and Miller and the committee for the opportunity to address you today.

My name is Ben Parady and I live in Unionville, CT at 300 Plainville Ave. Apt 115

I am an Advocate, Vice Chair of CAC 18 and a person living with a mental illness. I was also an Emergency Medical Services volunteer for more than 12 years. I would like to take this opportunity to address a few sensitive issues that Sandy Hook has created.

The event that took place in Sandy Hook on December 14, 2012 was a horror to see.

No one that I know who lives with a mental illness thinks any less. There is a problem

though that is coming out of all of the talk. On radio, TV and in the press there is the

perception that all people who suffer from a mental illness are potentially crazed

maniac's who must be put away. In the depths of my darkest moments I was a danger

only to myself. Likewise the many people that I am friends with, converse with and

Advocate for are similarly a danger to themselves only. In 12 years of EMS work I was

part of only one call in which the person was a danger to others. In all other cases I have

witnessed or heard of -through my advocacy work- and my own attempts included there

was a marked attempt to isolate not only to stop interruption but attempting suicide is

and was a personal choice that did not involve others. I am worried that all of the

rhetoric will cause a person in crisis to not reach out because they fear being labeled.

Those of us who advocate well remember the "stigma" that attached to being mentally

ill and how over the years we have battled to remove the "stigma". Well now the

“stigma” is back and in some cases worse. When I first entered “the system” I was convinced that I would be labeled as a lost cause or a “throw away”. I have since learned that, that is not true. I wonder now if that will also change. I have become an Advocate for persons with disabilities-of all kinds- but mental illness and Multiple Sclerosis -both of which I have- are priorities. What happens when a person avoids treatment to avoid “stigma”. It can and will in some ways become a self full-filling prophecy. In the interest of “Public Health” stop the labels and stigma before a larger problem is created.

In the area of EMS. I was on only one call in which a child was lost. That was 25 years ago and I can see the child’s face as clear now as I did on that day. How the police, fire and EMS are dealing with 20 children in 1 day; I cannot comprehend. Post-Traumatic Stress should be equally covered as an injury on the job.

How the families are dealing with that horrible day, again I cannot comprehend. Take military style weapons out of the hands of non-military citizens.

I again thank you all for this opportunity to address you today. I know that there are no easy answers to the issues that I brought up today but we can find them if we all work together.