

Senator Looney and Rep. Miner and Members of the Safer CT Task Force,
There have been many who testified today to the needs of our citizens for easy access to mental health care and thoughtful ways to get this done.

I would like specifically recommend a way to fund this. I would suggest taxing firearm and ammunition sales to pay for the expansion we need in mental health care. The harm done to our state by gun violence needs to be paid back by those who sell and purchase firearms and ammunition.

I would like to buttress the above suggestion by pointing out that the majority of gun deaths nationwide are from gun suicide. While the numbers vary somewhat from year to year, approximately 16,000 Americans a year complete a suicide with a firearm. Firearm suicides are the majority of all suicides in America. Most of the dead are white males who are middle-aged or older.

We need a massive public safety campaign to inform people of the signs that persons may be thinking about killing themselves, that many choose to take this action from as little as 5 minute to within one day from first thinking of it and not exhibit any signs, and that a firearm in the home increases the risk of death by suicide. Nearly all other means have a “back-out”-people can survive by changing their minds before dying and getting help to save their lives, or by being found by someone and saved through quick intervention.

The Harvard School of Public Health has very good information on completed suicide factors. They especially emphasizing that means matter. I call your attention to this information at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/>

Of particular interest is the program that HSPH has developed with gun store owners in New Hampshire to inform gun owners of the risks of firearms in the home.

Thank you for your efforts to make CT citizens more safe.

Sincerely,
Karen Fischer
New London, CT