

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Oversight and Reform
Hearing: The Urgent Need to Address the Gun Violence Epidemic
June 8, 2022
Testimony of Lucretia Hughes Klucken

Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and distinguished members of the Committee thank you for allowing me to be here today to address violence in our country. My name is Lucretia Hughes Klucken. I have four children and nine grandchildren.

On the night of April 2, 2016, my family got the phone call that would change our lives forever. My ex-husband answered the phone and let out a blood curdling scream-- a scream of pain from the depths of his soul. He screamed and cried, "He's gone, he's gone."

Our 19 year-old son, Emmanuel, went to a party earlier that night. After we got the call, we were frantic. We called his phone, but no one answered. We didn't even call the police. I went to facebook and asked,, 'is my son dead?' I found out he had been shot point-blank in the head and killed while playing dominos. No one spoke up for weeks, and the killer was on the run. No one was going to snitch. That's the reality of street life.

Words can't describe how hard it is to bury a child. I ache for all of you who have so recently done the same.

My son's death resulted from a criminal with an evil heart and a justice system failing to hold him accountable for laws he had already broken. You see, a convicted felon killed him with an illegally obtained gun. Gun control lobbyists and politicians claim their policies will save lives and reduce violence. Well, these policies did not protect my son.

The laws being discussed are already implemented in cities across the country. We have decades of evidence proving that they do not work. St. Louis, Chicago Washington, DC and my home, Atlanta, are gun control utopias and they are plagued with the most violence. Ten more laws, twenty more, or 1,000 more, won't make what is already illegal more wrong or stop criminals from committing crimes. You are crazy to think that these laws will keep you safe

I am a walking testimony of how the criminal justice system and gun control laws, (which are steeped in racism by the way) have failed the black community. By the age of 25, I had been to 18 funerals for young black men. I have one black man in jail. I have another black man in the grave. I have a black boy without a father. It is the curse of the black community and something has to change. Thoughts and prayers and calls for more gun control isn't enough.

How about letting me defend myself against evil? Do you think I'm not capable or trustworthy to handle firearms? Do you think the Second Amendment does not apply to people that look like me?

You who call for more gun control are the same ones that call to defund the police. Who is supposed to protect me? We must prepare to be our own first responders to protect ourselves and our loved ones. I am a legal, law abiding citizen. I don't need the government to save me. I teach people how to use firearms and empower others that look like me to understand that the Second Amendment is their right, too.

I am also a proud member of the DC Project, Women for Gun Rights. We believe that education is the key to safety, not ineffective legislation. We support meaningful solutions that will actually save lives.

We support the Safe Students Act (HR 7415), which would immediately make schools safer. In hindsight of Parkland, we saw the failures of the government at every level, failing the students. Students saw something and said something and the school didn't act. Police were called to his residence over 30 times and they didn't act. And finally, police didn't go into the school that

fateful day and failed to protect the students. We need to secure our schools like we secure this building.

We call on Congress to ban gun-free zones, fund non-partisan firearms education programs like KidSafe Foundation and non-government mental health organizations like Hold My Guns.

Members of Congress appreciate the role armed security plays in their lives. This Capitol is surrounded by its own police force who carry firearms. The debate is really between “safety from guns” and “safety with guns.” Most legislators here are not against weapons; they are just against the citizenry of having firearms and using them illegally. The Center for Disease Control estimates that civilians use firearms for self-defense more than 500,000 times to nearly 3 million times per year, making it apparent that restricting guns would leave up to 3 million people defenseless and potential victims.

For over 30 years, several major cities have adopted the strictest gun control policies. But, years of evidence indicate these policies do not work. The results are the same. What is obvious is that average citizens are less capable of defending themselves, criminals are emboldened, crime soars, and communities are less safe. These cities would be the shining example of gun control success if these policies worked.

On March 23, 2021, Dr. Suzanna Hupp testified before the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, she also testified in 1993, 2013, and 2018 and her message did not change. Mass killers prefer gun-free zones, magazine capacity limits are ineffective, and she was legislated out of the means to protect herself. Further, she holds legislators responsible for her parent’s death. She adeptly argues that gun control laws fail to protect and cost lives.

The DC Project is a valuable educational resource for new and seasoned gun owners alike. In 2020, a record number of Americans became first-time gun owners. Among the reported 8.4 million first-time gun owners, nearly 3.4 million were women. In 2015, one in 10 women identified as a gun owner. In 2020, one in four, or 25%, identified as gun owners. Instructors nationwide report an increase in students up to 200%.

The DC Project encourages legislators to focus on evidence-based solutions to include:

Passing the Safe Students Act (HR 7415), which would immediately make schools safer and recruit veterans, reservists, and retired or off-duty law enforcement for every school in the country. Further, ensure a mental health professional at every school to identify and treat students struggling with mental and emotional well-being.

Significantly reduce the number of gun-free zones. Any remaining gun-free zones should be held liable for protection services for anyone within the jurisdiction.

Fund non-partisan firearm safety education, like the K.I.D.S. Safe Foundation to teach a non-partisan firearm safety course to every first-grader in the country.

Fund non-government organizations that provide safe storage of firearms when families and individuals are experiencing difficult times, like Hold My Guns.

Enhance economic opportunities for young men to have something more significant to live for than the unfortunate attention they receive by committing crimes.

Policies in the Protecting Our Kids Act, (HR 7910) will not prevent criminals from committing crimes and often cost responsible gun owners their lives or subject them to trauma by not being able to defend themselves. Education, training, and safe firearms handling are the keys to saving lives. The following proposals are misguided and will not have the intended results.

- 1) Magazine capacity restrictions are ineffective. This proposal is based on the argument that it would decrease death in a mass shooting; it makes a determination about the number of dead people that are acceptable or unacceptable in a mass shooting. Furthermore, if someone is going to commit murder, they are likely to subvert this law. It also shows that advocates don't understand how quickly a magazine can be changed. One life lost in a criminal homicide is one too many.
- 2) Red flag laws are unconstitutional and put people at risk. Every state already has a vehicle in place to handle people in crisis. If someone is a threat to themselves or others, they can be held for a 72 Hour Emergency Order of Detention that requires a psychological evaluation. The standard Red Flag protocol lacks compassion for someone in crisis, fails to offer services and leaves them defenseless. Furthermore, red flag laws make it easy for someone to harass someone for any reason. Red flag laws could discourage people in crisis from seeking help for fear of being disarmed. Further, the Supreme Court just ruled against the seizure of firearms in a case similar to a red flag law.
- 3) Waiting periods have proven deadly by putting lives at risk during the waiting period. Restraining orders are pieces of paper that allow the system to prosecute for violating the terms, which are generally not illegal. Security measures do not always protect the victim. This tactic may seem like a good idea but proves to be a failure and costs innocent lives.

- 4) Gun-Free Zones 94% of mass public shootings have occurred in gun-free zones¹¹. Gun-free zones offer the highest probability of success for a demented person to inflict harm on a large number of people without meeting resistance. Mass shooters are only stopped when met with equal or greater force.
- 5) Expanded background checks will not prevent criminals from obtaining guns. Despite claims that over 90% of Americans support expanded background checks, most people probably want the background checks to predict future motives and work to reduce gun violence. A joint study conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the University of California at Davis Violence Prevention Research Program found that California's much-touted mandated background checks had no impact on gun deaths.
- 6) Assault Weapons Ban According to the FBI, more deaths occur from hammers and blunt objects each year than are not the cause of mass murders. More people are killed annually with blunt objects/hammers or personal weapons (hands, fists, and feet) than rifles of all types, including the much talked about AR15/weapon of war.

In closing, nothing in these bills do anything to make us safer or address the mental health crisis in this country. Despite living with the heartache of the loss of my son daily, I believe that it is our God-given right to defend ourselves from acts of violence. Taking away my rights and the rights of law-abiding citizens will not bring Emmanuel back, but it will embolden criminals. We all want the same thing. To be safe. Gun owners are not the enemy and these gun control policies are not the solution.