

Mr. Chair and Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to be heard today. I'm Jennifer Longdon - a mom, a hockey fan, a home cook, a gun owner and a Member of the Arizona House of Representatives.

Once upon a time, I was an entrepreneur, an avid hiker, in training for my first world title in martial arts.

That all changed fifteen years ago -- when I was -- *murdered*.

I'm dying in slow motion. -- -- My life **will** be cut short by the complications of my gunshot wound. I've lost count of my near misses - the fractures, pressure sores and hospitalizations.

November 15th, 2004, was such a beautiful night. I was holding my fiancé's hand on our way to get dinner. We were 36 hours back from a dream trip to Fiji where we finally set a date to marry. In that idyllic moment, someone fired a gun. Five bullets later, we were shattered. All on our way to get a drive-thru taco.

My fiancé was shot in the shoulder, another bullet went through his wrist and into his left temple. A fragment of that bullet still rests behind his right eye. He's now blind, and lives with a catastrophic brain injury.

I was hit in the back by the last bullet fired and paralyzed at mid-chest. My first surgery was performed without anesthesia because I'd lost too much blood to risk sedation. My then 12-year-old son was ripped from his warm bed in the middle of the night to say goodbye and comfort his dying mother.

We weren't in a "bad neighborhood" or buying drugs. It wasn't road rage. We were simply two of the roughly 262 people who were shot in the US on any given day. That daily average has only grown over the years.

I've struggled with what to tell you about the cost of gun violence. You have stacks of studies and reports in your offices. Those have not moved you to action. Neither have the personal stories of the hundreds of thousands of survivors told in these halls.

In an August 2015 story published by Mother Jones, I pegged my costs at roughly \$5 million for the first 10 years of my injury. That included medical costs, modifications to my home and vehicle and actuary figures for lost wages.

My family has paid so much more than fits neatly in an accounting ledger.

I come here humbly to ask *you* to help me with the "survivor math."

What is the worth of my son's innocence and loss of his active and able-bodied mother? What price will he pay for the rest of his life because when he needed me most, I was clawing for mere survival? What dollar figure do you put on him studying for college finals beside my ICU bed as I lay dying --yet again -- from sepsis, a complication of my injury. He's dealt time and again with doctors preparing him for **this one** being the time I don't rally and pull through.

What value can we place on the loss of my former fiancé's role in shaping, mentoring and coaching youth in our community? His karate school was a vehicle to teach leadership skills to young people.

What must I give to live just one day pain-free? When do I recover my sense of joy, well-being and trust?

Thank you for exploring the cost of gun violence. I predict you'll have another neat stack of numbers that identify the price of funerals and lost wages, attendant care, and the costs to our public safety, criminal justice and healthcare systems. These can be quantified.

What won't translate on those pages is the simple fact that our inaction as a nation to curb gun violence means that on any given day in OUR America, an average of 321 families pay a price in blood and loss that is incalculable.

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On November 15th, 2004, I was murdered. Please do not let my death be in vain.