

Testimony of Representative Mike Thompson
Chairman, Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

Subcommittee on Oversight
Committee on Ways & Means

The Public Health Consequences and Costs of Gun Violence
September 26, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Kelly. As Chairman of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, I am grateful that you are taking the time to explore this issue. For too long, gun violence and the toll it is taking on our country has been ignored by the Senate. I applaud your leadership and thoughtful approach to addressing the growing epidemic in our country.

I want to start out by saying that I am a life-long gun owner and I support the Second Amendment. I would not support policy or legislation that infringes on the rights of lawful gun owners, but I am not going to sit by while a generation of young people is traumatized by gun violence.

A recent study by the Giffords Law Center found the massive economic cost of gun violence is \$229 billion every year. That includes \$8.6 billion in direct expenses like emergency and medical care. That is staggering and should be a call to action.

What I want to talk about today is not the fiscal cost, but the human cost. We now have a generation of young people who have only known a life with school shootings and lives lost at churches, concerts, festivals, and in their communities.

This year alone, more than 500 children under the age of 12 have been killed or injured by someone using a gun. More than 2,200 young people between 12 and 17 years old have been killed or injured. That doesn't take into account the lives shattered when young people lose a friend or relative.

Since Sandy Hook, there have been more than 450 incidents of gunfire on or near school grounds. Architects are now designing schools with features to limit the impact of mass shootings.

Children are being traumatized by active shooter drills. All of this is because of a failure of Congress to act and implement commonsense reforms. Children are dying because of inaction.

Last week, the Task Force heard from a young leader from Baltimore, Destini Philpot, who saw a dead body at the age of 7. That was the first of many dead bodies Destini would see.

Destini has attended 13 funerals for people whose lives were ended by gun violence. Earlier this month, we heard from Ariel Hobbs, a young woman from Parkland. She told us most of the contacts in her phone have ties to death – people who have been traumatized by gun violence.

More children will die and face irreversible trauma if Congress doesn't act. The House has passed my bipartisan legislation to close loopholes in our background check system. It has been more than 200 days since we acted. Meanwhile, Majority Leader McConnell and the President have done nothing. What will it take? How many children must die? Shame on Mitch McConnell and Senate Republicans. The children of America are begging you to act. Their lives depend on it.