



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
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**Testimony of New York City Mayor Eric Adams  
House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
“The Urgent Need to Address the Gun Violence Epidemic”  
June 8, 2022**

Thank you, Chairwoman Maloney, for the invitation to testify today. I also want to thank all the members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, members from the New York City Congressional Delegation, and everyone who has testified today, especially those who have so bravely shared their stories of losing loved ones to gun violence. I am Eric Adams, and I am honored to appear before you today as the 110th Mayor of the great City of New York and to discuss the ways we can protect public safety and prevent gun violence.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is high noon in America. Time for every one of us to decide where we stand on the issue of gun violence. Time to decide if it is more important to protect the profits of gun manufacturers or the bodies of our children. Time to decide if we are going to be a nation of laws, or a confederation of chaos. And we must do it now.

It is high noon in America. The clock is ticking, every day, every minute towards another hour of death. We must confront this crisis with moral force and patriotic pride. This is America. If we want to remain the land of the FREE, then we must be BRAVE. I am here today to ask every one of you, and everyone in this Congress, to stand with me to end gun violence and protect the lives of all Americans. We are facing a crisis that is killing more Americans than war. A crisis that is now the number one cause of death for our young people. According to new CDC data, guns are the number one killer of children in our country. In the last two decades, more school-aged children have died because of gun violence than on-duty police officers. It is not just a crisis of mass shootings, but of everyday gun violence.

Today’s discussion is not about law-abiding citizens who own guns for hunting, sport, and recreation. It is about individuals who seek to profit from gun culture at any cost, even at the expense of human life. This is about a culture of violence, despair, and extremism that sends the message that it is every man for himself. About social media sites that allow our young people to become radicalized 24 hours a day. Gun companies that provide weapons of war on an installment

plan, marketing guns as a sign of manhood, and rebranding violence as freedom. But we cannot be free if we live in fear.

New York has strong gun laws and we are making progress on reducing shootings and gun violence, thanks to the hard work of the New York City Police Department (NYPD). But the patchwork of various state laws that keeps the Iron Pipeline of illegal guns flowing into our cities and communities from all over the country remains problematic. NYPD has taken over 3000 illegal guns off our streets this year alone, but the guns just keep coming. And now we face the new threat of ghost guns. The NYPD has seized 153 ghost guns this year, a 314 percent increase over last year. Illegal American guns are going everywhere – not just to New York and Chicago, but to Mexico and Canada and beyond. People in Toronto, Canada and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are being killed with these American guns. Is that the example we choose to set?

If we are to lead the world, we must do the right thing on guns. This is a crisis that transcends party lines and affects both rural and urban communities. I know firsthand as the co-chair of Everytown's nonpartisan coalition on Mayors Against Illegal Guns (MAIGs). No matter what our party affiliation, we are united in our mission to stop crime, save lives, and bring an end to gun violence. Because this isn't about Blue versus Red, this about right versus wrong. We must either accept our collective responsibility to protect the majority who want to live, work, and raise their families in safety, or we side with those who put profit over peace. Those who believe murder is the price of doing business. We must summon the moral courage to make this country safer for our children, our grandparents, and our neighbors. Whether it is on the street wearing a badge, or in these chambers taking a vote, we must stand for what is right.

First, we need Congress to take the handcuffs off the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and let them do their job. That means confirming President Biden's nominee Steve Dettelbach as Director of ATF. No more delays and obstruction. The ATF must be allowed to function without political interference. It is no secret that the NRA has pressured Congress to defund the ATF over the years, undermining public safety, and putting American lives at risk. And they have wrongly pushed for restrictions on the ATF's use of gun-ownership data, in an effort to thwart reform and dodge accountability. But going forward, the ATF must be allowed to enforce the law of the land. That means expanding and modernizing the agency. It means giving the ATF the funding it needs to hire more special agents, more field inspectors, build a fully functional gun database, and establish strategic partnerships with local law enforcement agencies like the Gun Violence Suppression Division in New York City. And it also means giving ATF field inspectors back their badges, which were taken away in 2003. As a former police officer, I say: Bring back the badge. The ATF needs to know they have the strong support of the American people as they do the work of enforcing the law and protecting the peace. I salute the leadership of the House Oversight Committee for its work with the ATF to understand and identify the many causes of our country's gun violence crisis, including those who profit by it.

We must work together to dam all the rivers that lead to this sea of violence. Common-sense gun reform must become the law of the land. I am pleased that today the House will vote on H.R.7910, the *Protecting Our Kids Act*, sponsored by House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler, and I urge swift passage of the gun violence prevention package for consideration in the Senate. I also urge the Senate to pass H.R. 8, the *Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021*, and H.R. 1446, the *Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021*. These are bipartisan, sensible gun safety bills that will strengthen background checks to make our cities and our people safer. I also stand with President Joe Biden in calling on Congress to act now to regulate or ban assault weapons in this country. Even if we only raise the age required to buy one of these weapons, lives will be saved. We must also enact legislation establishing a National Red Flag Law Database that will allow law enforcement agencies across the board to prevent criminals or those in crisis from accessing guns. I also support a National Secure Storage law requiring gun owners to secure their guns, both to protect young people from hurting themselves and to reduce the number of guns that are stolen and end up in the hands of criminals. We must also take action to hold social media companies accountable for the violence and extremism that are being promoted on their platforms in plain view of millions of users.

I commend the hard work of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and Senator Chris Murphy for their continued advocacy on commonsense reforms to reduce gun violence. And I am committed to working with Congress to do everything we can to bring an end to the gun violence crisis. We also need Congress to direct federal aid to localities and states that supports not just law enforcement and violence prevention, but also access to high-quality healthcare, childcare, education, and housing. That includes building a society where our youth are on a path to fulfillment, not a road to ruin. I have called for the establishment of a new urban agenda to address these issues in our city's Blueprint to End Gun Violence and an Executive Order I issued last week announcing the formation of the Gun Violence Prevention Task Force.

As Mayor, my greatest responsibility is protecting the lives and the safety of the people of New York City. This is my calling, my duty, and my life's work. I did it as a police officer, in a uniform and wearing the badge. And I do it now, as the elected leader of our largest American city. But I need your help to further protect our people and to save lives. We must stand together to end this era of lawlessness and disorder. The time to act is now. Not just because every day people are dying from preventable gun violence, but also because in the coming days and weeks, the Supreme Court could hand down a decision that could dramatically increase the number of guns on our streets. They could invalidate our concealed carry laws, laws that have been in place for over 100 years without controversy. Who will feel safe at school, in a parking lot or on the subway if one word or one look could start a conflict that could lead instantly to violent death? We cannot let America the Beautiful become an armed camp. A place where people fear each other instead of looking out for one another.

It is high noon in America. Time to live up to our ideals, or submit to our fears. To decide if we are on the right side of history, or in the pocket of the gun cartels. There are no gray areas here. It is black and white, good versus evil. No one is safe as long as we continue to put the profits of gun manufacturers over the lives of our children. We cannot let the bad guys run out the clock, water down the laws, and continue to endanger innocent lives. We must listen to the voices of the families of the victims who are crying out for an end to this relentless slaughter. And we must summon the courage of all those who have fought to protect American freedoms and American democracy over the years and take action on gun violence now. Because if you truly love this country, then you love your neighbor and you fight for their freedoms, for their families, and for their lives.

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