

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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### Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Committee on Oversight and Reform Hearing on “The Urgent Need to Address the Gun Violence Epidemic” June 8, 2022

Today, we will examine the destruction and heartbreak that gun violence is causing across our country.

I want to express my deep gratitude to each of our witnesses for being here today. **I am particularly grateful to our witnesses who will be discussing the loss of their loved ones and their personal experiences from recent mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas, and Buffalo, New York.**

Despite their pain, these witnesses expressed their strong desire to share their stories with this Committee and the public. I know I speak for every Member of this Committee when I say that that we are inspired by your bravery.

For a parent, there is no greater pain than the loss of a child. But across the country, senseless gun violence is claiming the lives of our children and loved ones in places where they should be safe—our schools, our supermarkets, even our churches and synagogues.

**Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for children in our country. As a society, we are failing our children and we are failing each other.**

**This out-of-control gun violence is a uniquely American tragedy.** As you can see in this chart, in 2019, the United States suffered 17 times more gun deaths than the next highest G7 country. **And no other country even comes close to the number of school shootings we have. Between 2009 and 2018, the U.S. had 288 school shootings. All other G7 countries combined had just five.**

**Some of my colleagues across the aisle have blamed this violence on mental illness. They have blamed violent video games. They have blamed family values. They have even blamed doors. They have blamed everything but guns.** But we know the United States does not have a monopoly on mental illness, video games, or any other excuse.

What America does have is widespread access to guns. That includes assault weapons, which were designed to kill as many enemy soldiers on the battlefield as possible. Yet in many states, these weapons of war can be purchased by an 18-year-old, just by walking into a store.

**Assault weapons were used in the recent massacres in Buffalo, Uvalde, and Tulsa—just as they were in Parkland, Newtown, San Bernardino, Orlando, Las Vegas, and so many other mass shootings. These weapons have no place in our communities.** No civilian needs an assault rifle, and the Second Amendment does not protect the right to own a weapon of war. **It’s time that we ban assault rifles from our streets and homes.**

But if we are going to truly address the gun crisis, we need to be honest about why our country has failed to act sooner.

**The truth is, the gun industry is making billions of dollars selling the weapons that are killing our children—and they are fighting tooth and nail to keep doing it. That is why I launched an investigation into**

**five leading gun manufacturers that sell assault weapons used in mass shootings.** We need to know why these companies are marketing military weapons to civilians, and how much they are **profiting** from the death of our kids.

Of course, mass shootings are just one part of this crisis. We can't forget that gun violence is a steady drum beat in so many of our towns and cities, especially in marginalized communities. Black men make up more than half of all gun victims in the U.S., despite making up less than 6% of the population. Latinos are twice as likely to be killed by a gun and four times as likely to be wounded by a gun as white Americans.

**We need transparency into how guns are reaching the hands of criminals, which is why this Committee has been working to identify the gun dealers that are selling the most guns used in crimes, including across state lines.**

**Today, the House is voting to pass commonsense gun safety legislation, which is a crucial first step in addressing this crisis.** I am particularly grateful this bill will include key provisions similar to a bipartisan bill I first introduced more than ten years ago, with the strong support of former Chairman Elijah Cummings. My bill will make gun trafficking a federal felony and strengthen penalties for straw purchasers, which will help stop the flow of guns into the hands of criminals.

My goal for today's hearing is simple. I am asking every Member of this Committee to listen with an open heart to the brave witnesses who have come forward to tell their stories about how gun violence has impacted their lives.

**Our witnesses today have endured pain and loss. Yet they are displaying incredible courage by coming here to ask us to do our jobs. Let us hear their voices. Let us honor their courage. And let us find the same courage to pass commonsense laws to protect our children.**

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