

Ariana Costa

From: Angela H. McParland <amcparland@sistersofmercy.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2025 4:39 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Cc: Rep. McNamara, Joseph M.
Subject: Sisters of Mercy Justice Testimony in favor of H 5436

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

There is nothing normal about the levels of gun violence we are seeing, and we refuse to become desensitized to this violence and the toll of human life gun violence continues to cost the American people. Scripture reminds us that every single human being is created in the image of God; every gun death is not a statistic but a loss of a life full of dignity, worth, and promise. The frequency of mass shootings is occurring at a pace that robs us of time and space to grieve and heal. And yet even as we as people of faith add our prayers and lamentations to so many others, we cannot continue to simply react, pray, and repeat this cycle of death.”

—From [Sisters of Mercy statement on gun violence, January 25, 2023](#)

The above words are from our statement as the Sisters of Mercy from 2023, many many mass shootings ago when we were speaking about Half Moon Bay and Monterey Park. Before Alabama and Louisville and Nashville and Michigan State and so many others in the two years since. They blur together and threaten to make us numb to the loss of life.

Good afternoon—my name is Angela Howard-McParland and I work for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, an order of Catholic sisters with over 3000 sisters across the United States, Latin America, and the Philippines. Our legacy of Mercy looms large here in Rhode Island with over 100 sisters and associates in the area and schools like Bay View Academy, and many ministries originally founded with a Mercy mission such as Amos House, Dorcas International, and the Nonviolence Institute.

I am also the mother of three young children, now long familiar with active shooter drills at their elementary school in Cranston.

I am here tonight to ask you to pass HB 5436, a ban on assault weapons.

My work for the Sisters of Mercy is on our Institute Justice Team where I organize and support sisters and associates across the Northeast, particularly here in RI, around what we call our Critical Concerns: nonviolence, racism, women, earth, and immigration. Our work is in direct service as in the above ministries as well as justice—advocacy for legislation towards a better world.

Additionally, my role includes focus on one federal legislative topic that I follow across states, and attend four coalition meetings per week on: that topic is Gun Violence. From both a Mercy perspective and as someone whose job it is to follow the daily PLUS mass shootings in this country, I can tell you that what has been characterized as a politically divisive topic is actually a public health, mental health, and cultural crisis that sets the United States in a class apart from comparable countries.

As of this afternoon, there have been more than 3,000 people killed by gun violence in this country in 2025 so far, a number that does not include suicides. That’s more than 3 thousand individual lives with families, friends, histories, and dreams ahead of them that were lost too soon. You’ve already heard that There have been 58

Mass shootings with today being only the 85th day of the year. Most of these shootings are so common place they don't even make the headlines.

You have also heard multiple times that guns are now the NUMBER ONE cause of death in children under the age of 19 in this country. More than cancer, car accidents, it is firearms that are killing our children. Children who live in a home with a gun are at 2X the risk of homicide and 3X the risk of suicide and 76% of school shooters get their guns from their homes or from their relative's homes.

Relative to the comment earlier about peer nations, **In 2015, 92% of women killed with guns in high-income countries were in the U.S. and U.S. women are 28% more likely to die by firearm homicides than women in peer nations.**

Assault-style weapons have been used in ten of the seventeen deadliest mass shootings, In nearly every one of these cases, these military weapons of war were purchased legally. Law-abiding citizens, including gun owners, are law-abiding, until they are not.

We know that these high capacity guns make it vastly easier to shoot and kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible, making the mass shootings in the US deadlier. There is no need, regardless of intention, for any citizen to have access to these weapons of war. And public opinion agrees: nearly 70% of the population is in favor of a ban on assault weapons according to the Pew Research Center.

Since the Sandy Hook massacre, the gun industry has made more **\$11 billion** manufacturing and selling AR-15's and these weapons now constitute 23.4% of all guns produced, up from 1.2% in 1990. Data shows that a federal ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines makes a difference and saves lives. When a federal ban was in effect from 1994-2004, mass shooting-related deaths were **70% less likely to occur.** That means countless lives saved from preventable tragedies. But after Congress let the ban expire in 2004, **mass shooting deaths have increased by 347%.**

Catholic social teaching tells us that we should judge our society by how the most vulnerable members are faring. Gun violence is stealing our children and devastating Black and brown communities at disproportionate rates. Arms trafficking across the border puts more in harm's way attempting to meet American demands for deadly weapons all while creating record profits for the gun industry, who is profiting off the loss of life and a climate of fear. Those who enjoy hunting and shooting as hobbies and lifestyles do not NEED access to assault weapons to continue those pursuits. This law does not target law-abiding citizens, it simply seeks to get weapons of war off of our streets to reduce access to these deadliest of weapons.

I can tell you from the meetings of gun violence prevention coalitions around the country that momentum is high. Our coalition of Nuns Against Gun Violence represents thousands of religious sisters around the country through prayer, education, and advocacy for common sense gun legislation to preserve the dignity of life.

Americans and Rhode Islanders are ready to stop mass murders and access to military weapons, we are ready to protect our children, who have dubbed themselves Generation Lockdown. The energy is there. The time is now. Let's join the ten other states and Washington DC, and so many others on the right side of history so we can put our energy back into legislation that gives life to our communities rather than taking it away.

Angela Howard-McParland
Justice Resource Manager



Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

15 Highland View Road
Cumberland, RI 02864

t. 401.333.6333 x141 m. 615.943.1981

w. <https://www.sistersofmercy.org/mercy-for-justice/>

[Advocate with us](#) through Mercy's Action Alerts.