

As the mother of 2 daughters that survived the mass shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School, I can say our family knows the reality of gun violence. My husband and I are "the lucky ones"... our kids came home that day. The heartbreaking loss of friends and teachers along with the trauma that my girls suffer from, will have an impact on the rest of their lives. Dealing with PTSD, anxiety and depression are a constant struggle that I hope to prevent other families from enduring, by passing gun violence prevention legislation.

Our murderer had a history of mental health issues, violence and abuse of others that was well documented. He was given the opportunity of therapy almost his entire life and yet nothing stopped his violent tendencies. There were many warning signs that could not be acted on, because of the lack of gun laws. If we had red flag laws an extreme risk protection order could have allowed law enforcement to remove his guns. Without a background check on all gun sales, he could have found a way to purchase another firearm despite the order. These laws go hand in hand and if we had them in place in 2018, it would have increased the chance to stop the massacre from ever happening. That is what we are looking for. Laws aren't going to stop every act of gun violence, but it can definitely decrease the amount of dead, injured and traumatized survivors across this country.

By the way, my husband and I are gun owners. We had to pass background checks to get our concealed weapons' permits and purchase firearms. We have gun safes to keep them away from our children and others. We are by definition responsible gun owners that want laws to keep guns away from people that are a danger to themselves and others. We also believe in limitations, such as stopping the sales of ghost guns like the one used in the Saugus High School shooting. Finally, we don't believe that anyone in this country needs semi automatic rifles, like the AR-15 used to slaughter our daughters' friends and teachers in Parkland, FL.

Citizens across this country have spoken up since the Sandy Hook massacre and now our community has created a conversation from a new generation since the tragedy on 2/14/18. It is time for the U.S. Senate to have a serious debate and vote on the many items moving over from the House of Representatives. Bills that incorporate background checks on all gun sales, expansion of the waiting period for a background check, risk protection orders, safe firearm storage, expansion of the Violence Against Women Act, and an assault weapons ban will save lives. It's time to act now!

Regards,
Heather Chapman
MSD Mom