Testimony of Robin Brule
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 23, 2021

Good morning Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Robin Brule. It is an honor to appear before you today and I appreciate you holding this important hearing.

Last week, my heart ached for those suffering from the tragic shootings in Atlanta, in which 8 people were shot and killed — including 6 Asian-American women — and one was wounded. As a survivor of gun violence, I know that the grief, shock, and horror of these senseless killings will never go away. The moment you learn of the painful loss is frozen in time.

I still remember that moment for me. I picked up the phone, heard the police on the other end of the line, and knew right away that something had gone horribly wrong.

The police told me that day that my mother, Ruth Schwed, and her friend, Barbara, were shot and killed while eating breakfast in a sleepy Arizona retirement community.

Nothing can prepare a person for that. Since I was a little girl, my mom was always the person I turned to when I needed comfort. Yet in her final moments, I couldn't be there for her.

But before I tell you about her death, let me tell you about her life.

My mother was married to my dad for over 50 years, raised 3 kids, and was adored by all of her 8 grandchildren.

She spent over 30 years as a teacher, and to this day, we get letters from children who want to share the impact she had on them.

She had many close friends, calling everyone "doll babes" or "dear" and finishing every call by telling me to "have a goodie."

Most of all, she always put others above herself. That's what she was doing in Arizona on that February morning.

She was at the house that day because her close friend Barb had become a widow. My dad had died long before, so my mother knew what Barb was going through, and — as always –
– wanted to help.

But on the morning of February 8, 2016, two people broke into the home where they were staying — then shot my mother and Barb while they were having breakfast and reading the newspaper.

Two elderly women, shot point blank. All because some criminals wanted their credit cards and cash.

We always hear the saying about being in the wrong place at the wrong time. But if a retirement community at 8 am is the wrong place at the wrong time, where in America is the right place at the right time?

I tell you this story not only to honor my mother, but because tragedies like this can be prevented.

My mother's death began with an internet search for a gun. Because of loopholes in our law, it was perfectly legal to sell them the gun used to kill my mother — no background check and no questions asked.

If a strong background check law was in place, I could be having breakfast with my mother instead of appearing before your Committee.

But today, anyone with an internet connection can exploit the same loophole that killed her, and browse more than 1 million ads for guns in states that do not require background checks. And, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, nearly 1 in 9 people who respond to those ads can't pass a background check.

I'm a gun owner, and I believe fully in the Second Amendment. But I also know that it's time for Congress to listen to the 90% of Americans who understand that requiring a background check is common sense. Because no family should have to get that call that I got from police 5 years ago — the worst call in the world.

When my mother was brought back to Albuquerque after the autopsy, she was covered in a sheet to spare me. But I have not been spared.

I live with pain, stress, and fear. I often imagine my mother's final moments. I look at old photos and say her name so that her memory is not lost in the aftermath of this heartbreak.

Ruth Schwed.

Please honor her memory with action. Please pass legislation that will save lives and prevent other families from experiencing the trauma of gun violence. Please, do *something*.

Thank you.