

Good morning Chairman Durbin and members of the committee.

My name is Laura O'Donnell. I am a retired Chicago Police Lieutenant and I am one of the over 22,000 survivors of the Route 91 music festival mass shooting in Las Vegas.

I spent 24 years working in some of the most violent areas of Chicago, I am accustomed to seeing people on their worst day. I have witnessed numerous crime scenes, gunshot victims and even people taking their final breath. Yet nothing could have prepared me for October 1st 2017, the day of the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, when over 400 people were shot, 58 lives were lost and 2 others later succumbed to their injuries.

I know that you have all heard and possibly seen video of what happened but I want you to hear it from someone who was there. My husband, best friend, a co worker and I, all Chicago Police Officers, along with my sister in law who is a nurse, traveled to Las Vegas to attend a 3 day country concert. On the last night at 10:05 pm the unimaginable, indescribable chaos erupted. We heard pop pop pop, pop pop pop. At first, we thought it might be fireworks. Then a few seconds later we heard it again and we KNEW it was gunfire. It was louder, faster and nonstop. My husband pushed us all to the ground and laid his body over ours. With every volley of gunfire you could hear the bullets hitting the ground and people were screaming all around us. When the shooting momentarily paused, we began running towards the exit but we got to a bottleneck of people. We were separated from 2 of my friends and more gunfire erupted in a longer volley of bullets, we hit the ground again. We realized that we

could get trampled by this crowd and there was no other way out, the gates were locked and people started climbing fences.

As police officers, we are trained to look for cover when taking on gunfire and the only bit of protection was the metal bleachers. Once under the bleachers I saw people were crying, screaming and a lot were praying. You could hear the bullets hitting the bleachers making this ping ping ping sound. They were also hitting the metal grills in the food area and you could smell the food burning. I peered out of a slot of the bleachers, as I watched my husband move cautiously along the right side of the venue, telling people to drop everything and go while checking on people who were laying on the ground. Then longer volleys, hundreds of bullets. I was worried that my husband might get hit and die right in front of me. When you are in a fight or flight response, survival mode, your body shuts down everything that is not essential. It feels as if things are moving in slow motion, it is difficult to process anything but I remember thinking how can this still be going on, how can someone still be firing rounds? I also remember trying to think of the last things I said to my three children, my twin and younger sister. I really thought I might die in this venue and wanted to feel at peace that I had told them that I loved them. The shooting finally stopped, it seemed to last forever. I have no memory of the next few minutes as we walked out of the venue, passing the medical tent. Sometimes I wonder how chaotic and horrific that medical tent must have been that my mind will not let me remember it while other memories are still so vivid to this day. This is a picture of my husband and I minutes before the shooting started. This could have been the last picture we ever took.



This is the last picture that Carly Kreibaum took with her

friends.



She was 33 years old, a wife and a mother of two . She worked as a manager at Walmart and on the farm with her husband. She came from a small town of 500 people and had never been on a plane before that trip. I helped her two frantic friends check ambulances, showing her picture to police officers and calling hospitals looking for Carly. They later found out that she was shot multiple times and died inside the venue. We later drove 8 hours to Sutherland Iowa to attend her wake and stand as her honor guards in our CPD dress uniform with the town's lone police officer at her funeral.

In the aftermath of the shooting, I was in a daze, my mind was still moving slow but I was hyper vigilant. I had

trouble sleeping and struggled to cope with the memories that would replay in my mind. I had survivor guilt, I often wondered why am I still here? Why not me? During that time, I would have panic attacks in the grocery store and would just walk out without any groceries. It was difficult to leave my house unless my husband was with me as I did not feel safe especially in crowds. I wanted some control and my normal life back so I returned to work but it was challenging for me. My job at that time was the coordinator of the first SDSC, basically a Real Time Crime Center, in one of the most violent areas of Chicago, Englewood. One of my duties was to listen to the audio of gunfire captured by the ShotSpotter technology. As you can probably imagine it was distressing to listen to incidents of gunfire every day and I had to take more time off of work.

I sought help through my Employee Assistance Program. I did eventually return to work but triggers of the shooting would lead to heightened anxiety during scenarios training and annual qualifications at the shooting range. It was difficult to be in charge of officers during major events with large crowds and loud fireworks. I knew I needed more help. I began cognitive behavior therapy with a trauma therapist who worked with law enforcement. I also joined a weekly support group through the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center, which I am still apart of today. I even attended an intensive inpatient week long therapy program at Onsite called Triumph over Tragedy for mass shooting survivors, learning coping skills that I still rely on today.

Although it has been 7 years, loud noises, helicopters, crowded places, outdoor concerts to name a few, still activate me. To give you an example a co worker once

invited me to a Cubs game. This is how it plays out in my mind. It's an outdoor venue, it will be crowded, will I be sitting near an exit, I will have to wear gym shoes so I can run if I need to. I usually end up not going to things like this that I once enjoyed. My life is just not the same. I have my life before Route 91 and my life after Route 91. I know there must be a purpose to my life and there must be a reason I survived. Maybe telling my story here today is one of those reasons.

The shooter used multiple weapons including an AR-15 modified with a bump stock, turning it into a fully automatic weapon capable of firing 90 rounds in 10 seconds. That is almost 10 times more than without that modification. While I was in the venue, he unleashed over 1,000 rounds in 11 agonizing minutes. 400 people shot and over 800 injured. 58 people died that day, 36 women and 22 men. The 3 youngest were only 20 years old. I believe that if the shooter did not have a bump stock, more people would have had time to get out of the venue, less people would have been injured and of course less would have died. Every day I think of the people who lost their lives. Do not let those lives be forgotten. There are links at the end of my written testimony to the fully automatic gunfire from that day. I hope you all take the time to listen to it. I am urging you to take action today to ban these modifications to firearms to prevent future tragedies. Last week Chicago Police Officer Enrique Martinez was killed in the line of duty by a firearm modified with a switch, making it fully automatic. There is no good reason to turn a semi-automatic weapon into a machine gun.

Despite the progress I made, the scars from that day continue to impact my daily life. 1 October 2017 is a day

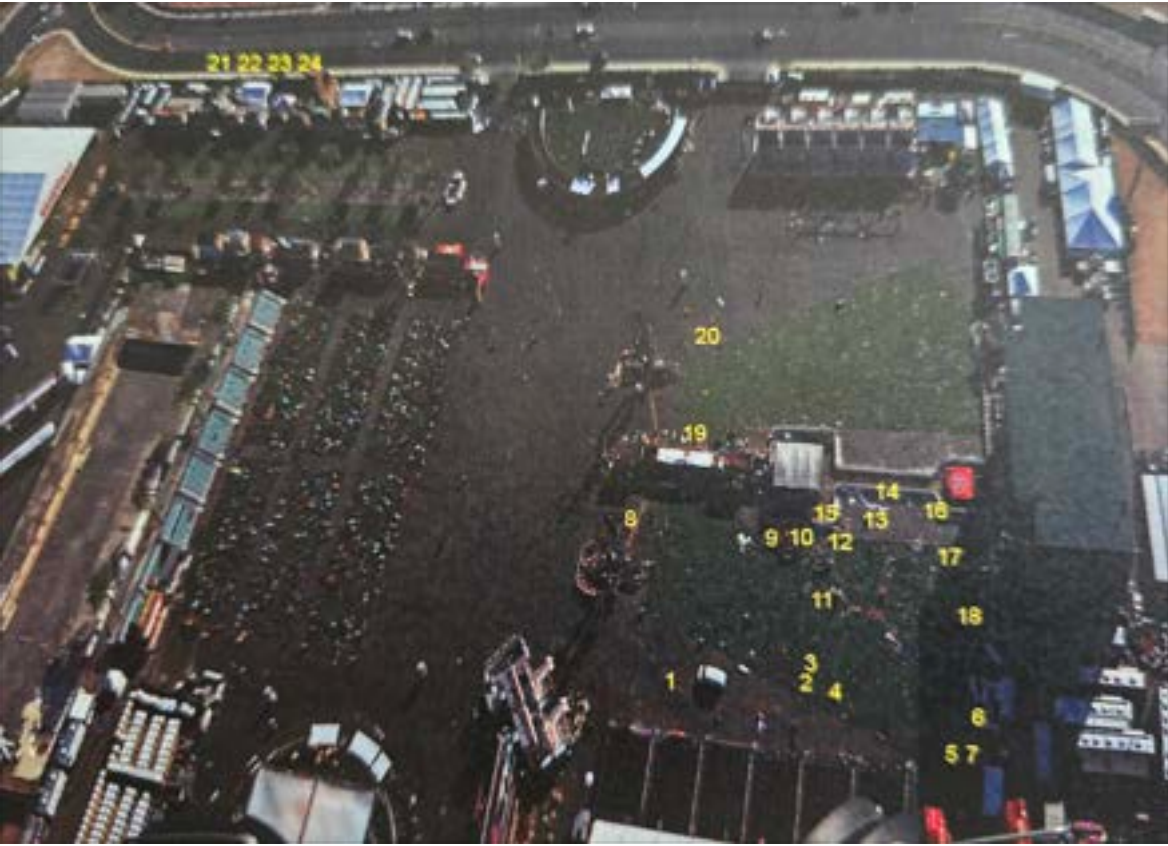
that I will never forget, it will never be forgotten by the 22,000 survivors or the family members of the 60 people who died. I hope you honor their memory. Our lives will never be the same.

Please consider supporting the Forever One Memorial, a permanent monument dedicated to honoring the 58 lives lost. It will be built on the festival grounds and hopefully completed by the 10 year anniversary to serve as a lasting reminder of those we lost and a place of reflection for all.

The pin I am wearing today was designed by Sue Ann Cornwell, a Route 91 survivor. The orange ribbon represents the Route 91 survivors and the monarch butterfly represents hope, change, transformation and the souls of the deceased.

VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l82X-7pwWmQ>
- <https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2017/10/02/las-vegas-shooting-concert-video-shots-von.cnn>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000005473328/las-vegas-shooting-timeline-12-bursts.html>



LMPD Preliminary Investigative Report

Carly is #19