

Statement of Dianna Muller

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“Protecting America from Assault Weapons” Hearing
House Committee on the Judiciary

Thank you, Chairman Nadler and Ranking Member Collins and Committee Members,

I am an ordinary American—one who has had different life experiences that bring me here today as a dissenter to any additional gun control laws, including the so-called Assault Weapon Ban.

After 22 years of service as a police officer with assignments that included patrol, street crimes, gangs, and narcotics, I retired to focus on a second career as a professional competition shooter. I am a world and national champion and have had the honor of representing this country on an international stage. I'm also an accidental advocate. Four years ago, I came to Washington, DC as a tourist, and during a chance meeting with my congressman, I asked if there was anything I, as a professional shooter, should do to dispel the misinformation about guns and gun owners. From there, the DC Project was born. It is a nonpartisan, educational effort of women, one from every state, who meet with their legislators as gun owners and Second Amendment supporters, to be a resource and voice for lawful gun owners.

I sit before you today honored to speak on behalf of those women - mothers, daughters, young and old, black, white, Latino and Asian, hunters and competitors, transgender and straight, #metoo and #notme, on the political left and right. We are as diverse as any cross section of America. To list a few among our ranks:

- Lara Smith, from California is a staunch Democrat and the National Spokesperson for the Liberal Gun Club and understands that the Second Amendment is a constitutional, not a partisan, issue;
- Mia Farinelli, from Virginia, is a 15-year-old 3-gun competitive shooter that stands 5'4", weighs 90 pounds; an honor roll student that speaks two languages and is learning a third;
- Robyn Sandoval, from Texas, is left-leaning, reformed anti-gun mom who now heads up A Girl and a Gun, a nationwide women's shooting club;
- Gina Roberts, from California, is a transgender woman who knows the Second Amendment is for everyone;
- Corinne Mosher, from Kansas, is a concert violinist turned tactical firearms instructor and takes keeping her family safe seriously;
- Amanda Johnson, from Virginia, was raped at gun point on a gun-free campus, yards from the police station; even though she had a concealed carry license, she left it at home because she wanted to follow the rules. Her attacker went on to rape and kill his next victim. Amanda is confident she could have made a difference in both of their outcomes if she had not been disarmed.
- Lucretia Hughes, from Georgia, is a African American who strongly advocates for the 2nd Amendment, in part, because she lost her son to gang violence when a felon used an illegally obtained gun to shoot him in the head;

- Gabby Franco, from Texas, is a mom and a naturalized citizen from Venezuela who has seen the effects of gun control in her native country;
- Kristi McMains, from Indiana, vigorously fought off a stranger's attack in a parking garage for several minutes before getting to her gun and shooting the assailant. She fought so hard she broke all ten nails, had fibers in her teeth from his gloves, and broken ribs;
- Melissa Schuster, from Illinois, was brutally beaten, stabbed and raped in a stranger home invasion;
- Shayna Lopez Rivas, from Florida, was raped at knifepoint on a gun free campus and only learned how to shoot afterwards, but now advocates for campus carry;
- Nikki Goesser, from Tennessee, husband was shot and killed by her stalker in a gun-free zone, while her permitted firearm remained in her vehicle, like the good, law abiding citizen she is.

Every DC Project member has a story and many of these women, like the victims of the recent mass murders, have endured unspeakable violence themselves or lost loved ones. Their stories are similar to that of Kate Nixon. According to reports, Kate knew her co-worker was unstable and felt he would 'shoot the place up'. Her husband encouraged her to take a pistol to work, but she didn't want to break the rules. She followed the policy that was supposed to keep her safe, a gun free zone. Kate went to work the next day and was in killed the Virginia Beach tragedy. These laws and policies take away a woman's right to choose. Gun rights are women's rights! That's why I'm honored to be here, to be a voice for the millions of women who share my beliefs, but are not represented in mainstream media or are squelched on social media.

As an instructor, I've had the honor of introducing many people, especially women, to firearms training. I notice many women go through amazing transformations. Their self-confidence is palatable. I had one woman who was terrified at the beginning of class and at the end. She looked me in the eye, took a hold of my arms and said, "You have changed my life. I. am. a. different. person." I see it time and time again how a little education can go a long way!

Why does anyone need an AR-15? Let me explain it in shoes. You wouldn't run a marathon dress shoes and you wouldn't go to a formal ball in sneakers. Similarly, each of my firearms have a specific purpose. The AR-15 falls into a category of a really comfortable, dressy flat that gets called on for many occasions. It's my go-to for a home defense and vehicle gun. As a competitor, I've turned a hobby into a living. My husband hunts with his AR platform. The AR platform is the most popular general-purpose rifle because it's the most versatile and customizable, and freedom doesn't ask 'why the need'. To quote William Pitt the Younger, "Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves."

Please allow me to address some of the basics about firearms. I've been hearing the phrases like 'assault weapon' and 'weapon of war' in reference to the AR-15. The "AR" stands for Armalite Rifle, the name of the original manufacturer, NOT assault rifle. You may hear it referred to as a modern sporting rifle. As far as a "weapon of war", let me remind you that

every firearm can be lethal. The only difference is in the intent of the operator. This common misconception about the most popular rifle in America is one of the reasons I started the DC Project, to promote education over legislation. Each year, we invite members and staffers to the range and each of you have access to training from professional shooters like myself. While I fully appreciate you listening to me today, you could get a better appreciation of the importance our community places on and the safe handling and operation of firearms if you were to come to the range.

As a police officer, I enforced the laws you created and I had a front row seat to the justice system. It's frustrating to see the revolving door where prosecutors reduce or drop charges and judges give minimal sentencing. I find it ironic in today's effort of criminal justice reform that you are taking steps to be lenient on people who have actually committed crimes AGAINST LAWS YOU CREATED, while at the same time you are proposing more laws, like the Assault Weapons Ban of 2019, that turn ordinary, law-abiding citizens into criminals. I submit that we work on holding people accountable for the laws that are already on the books before we pass any further legislation, that would only be a burden on the law-abiding. If these laws were the answer, Chicago, Baltimore, LA, and even this city, would be the safest cities in America.

If we learn anything from the Parkland tragedy, it is the repeated failure of government, laws, and policy. Students 'saw something and said something' to school administration; law enforcement responded to the shooter's residence more than 30 times, with no action taken. The ultimate failure in Parkland was from the responding officers that fateful day. They remained outside while students were continuing to be murdered inside. Parkland reminds us that law enforcement has no constitutional duty to protect.

If you ask what would have stopped the Parkland shooter, it's the same answer as in every shooting: being confronted with equal force. During my years serving the citizens of my community, I responded to countless calls for help. If you have ever called 911, you know it can feel like a lifetime for them to answer, let alone how long it takes for help to arrive. I don't wish for anyone to be defenseless, so I encourage people to seek training, at least unarmed, situational awareness and 'stop the bleed' training all the way up to firearms training, if they choose. Prepare to be your own first responder.

Ordinary citizens are safer when they have the tools to defend themselves and their families, and that includes the AR-15. As a woman, I'm likely smaller and less equipped for violence than an attacker or if I'm outnumbered by people who may do me harm, my firearm is the great equalizer and levels the playing field. I married late in life and for most of my adult life, I lived on my own. There were so many times I heard a bump in the middle of the night, but I had a peace about having an AR-15 by my side. I own and carry firearms not to take a life, but to protect a life. I am worth protecting. My family is worth protecting.

American gun owners recognize that we are up against a very well-organized, well-funded effort, assisted by the mainstream media, masterfully crafting campaigns to demonize guns and gun owners, and disarm our citizenry. From politicians, mainstream media and our schools

using their megaphones to paint gun owners as 'deplorables' or 'domestic terrorists' to now discriminating against gun owners. According to the FBI, more deaths occur from hammers and blunt objects each year than from all rifles combined. Common sense tells us that banning 'assault rifles' will not stop the problem of mass murders. Common sense tells me that if you succeed in banning this gun, you will go after the next gun when the next tragedy happens. My own experience with prior Assault Weapons Ban was it was ineffective. I saw zero impact on the streets and the FBI statistics confirmed it.

If you are intellectually honest you would look at civilian defensive uses of firearms, which according to the government's own CDC data estimates over one million times per year. Aren't those lives SAVED worth as much as the lives that have been taken by criminal homicide? Any ban on firearms will inhibit a citizen's ability to protect themselves and their families and their homes. Can you understand my hesitancy to support any laws that are designed to restrict or infringe on my God-given rights? The Constitution guarantees the government will not infringe on the right to keep and bear arms.

Each of you is actually pro-gun. Everyday in this very building, you are surrounded and protected by men and women with firearms; some of you just are against me and others having firearms. What about ordinary Americans who don't have the luxury of having someone else carry guns for us to protect us?

As a professional shooter, I've come to truly respect 'gun' folks. They are the 'good guys,' and they are the firearm safety experts. Although we're an extremely diverse group, racially, politically, and socioeconomically, our foremost priority as 'gun' people is ALWAYS safety through education. Education is vital when it comes to guns and keeping people, including children, safe. When I began shooting competitively 10 years ago, I was good at shooting, but what I really fell in love with were the people. Rest assured, if you put a picture or video on social media that is even remotely unsafe, you be hounded by our community! Our kids excel in education and are mature beyond their years, like I mentioned with Mia Farinelli. When I hear my community called 'domestic terrorists', it's incongruent with what I know to be true.

The firearms community IS leading the way in meaningful safety measures. We are addressing violence. I implore you, please work WITH us instead of demonizing us. Rather than attacking me because I belong to an organization that is founded on the principles of education and safety, look to me as an expert in my field. I am NOT the enemy. Millions of law-abiding American gun owners are NOT the enemy. Please HELP our community promote Project ChildSafe, Eddie Eagle, or the Kid Safe Foundation to teach kids about firearm safety; 'FASTER Saves Lives' or 'School Shield', school security programs; and 'Walk the Talk America', a suicide prevention program. If you really want to make a difference in gun-related deaths, get behind these programs and FUND them. Because we believe ONE life unjustifiably taken is one too many. Let's put firearms education back in schools and start protecting our kids like we protect the people in this building! Education over legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank you for your time and service.