

**Prepared Testimony of
Nick Suplina**

Everytown for Gun Safety

House Committee on Oversight and Reform

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Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee.

My name is Nick Suplina, and I'm senior vice president for law and policy at Everytown for Gun Safety, the country's largest gun violence prevention organization.

I'm honored to be here today, and grateful for the spotlight you're shining on America's gun violence crisis.

As we all know, this hearing comes not long after 10 people were shot and killed at a supermarket in Buffalo; 21 people were shot and killed at Robb Elementary in Uvalde and 4 people were shot and killed at a Tulsa hospital.

Frequent, public mass shootings terrorize the country and are a uniquely American problem.

No peer nation faces as many mass shootings as the United States, and our mass shootings are more deadly because of the availability of assault weapons and high capacity magazines.

Mass shootings often focus national attention and grief -- and with good reason -- but they represent a small fraction of all gun deaths in this country which include other gun homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings.

Altogether, every single day, some 110 Americans are killed with a gun and 200 more are physically wounded and we estimate that one half of all Americans have been touched by gun violence, either directly or through someone they care for.

To be clear, this burden is not being borne equally.

I'm talking about our children. Guns are now the leading cause of death for American kids.

I'm also talking about people of color. Black Americans experience 10 times the gun homicides of white Americans and 18 times the gun assault injuries.

The last thing I'll say about the scope of the crisis is this: As bad as things are right now, we're heading in the wrong direction.

2021 was one of the deadliest years on record in the United States — with the highest rate of gun homicide since 1994.

Clearly, what we're talking about here is a serious public health crisis, one that is crying out for sensible gun policy solutions, especially at the federal level.

Because of national inaction on these policies, we are not only losing over 40,000 Americans every year to gun violence, with more lives forever changed, we are costing taxpayers, survivors, families, employers, and communities \$280 billion each year.

Against this backdrop, I will focus my remarks on the approximately \$9 billion a year civilian firearms market that manufactures, advertises, and sells assault weapons, handguns, accessories, and ammunition.

There is no other way to put it: the gun industry has grown tremendously over the last two decades, business is booming, profits are breaking records.

And so are rates of gun violence.

It is a matter of public record that the gun industry believes that mass shootings are great for gun sales -- they are making money on these tragedies right now -- and the gun industry uses fear of gun violence and crime to sell more guns.

So when we talk about the shootings in Uvalde and Buffalo, when we talk about the toll of gun violence on our children, when we talk about the disproportionate impact on Black Americans, when we talk about policy solutions, we need to talk also about how the gun industry is shielded from the scrutiny and accountability that led the automotive, tobacco, and pharmaceutical industries to better and safer practices.

The gun industry, for its part, has innovated not to make guns -- or us -- safer, but to make them more dangerous, more likely to evade regulation, and its business more profitable.

Instead of designing firearms that can't be fired if stolen or unintentionally fired or that make it easy for law enforcement to trace when found at the scene of a crime, gunmakers have created binary triggers and bump stocks to mimic automatic fire, they have created impossible-to-trace ghost guns that help circumvent background checks, and they have designed AR-15s that can be modified in minutes to bypass a state's assault weapons law, as we saw in Buffalo.

They have normalized the AR platform because its simplicity and modularity makes it easy for gun owners to customize their rifles or build them from scratch, necessitating a huge, profitable aftermarket for parts and accessories. The industry built a similar ecosystem around simple, easy-to-modify Glock pistols.

And in a now crowded field, manufacturers of these guns are trying to market in increasingly brazen ways, often touting the deadliness of products, glorifying combat, and attempting to appeal to younger audiences.

A particularly timely — and tragic — example comes from Daniel Defense, maker of the military-style assault weapon used by the shooter in the Uvalde massacre. In social media posts

that would have made Joe Camel blush, the company targeted teens with references to Star Wars and Call of Duty. And even posted a photo of an AR-15 in the hands of a child.

Finally, let's not forget the industry has done almost nothing to take steps to prevent diversion of guns into the criminal market and to gun traffickers.

Between 2016 and 2020, over one million of the industry's firearms were recovered by law enforcement in connection to crimes.

An increasing percentage of the guns ending up at crime scenes were recently purchased — a telltale sign of illegal intent or activity at the point of sale, like a straw purchase.

Yet dealers are rarely held accountable. This Committee's investigation found one dealer in Georgia, for example, that over five years sold more than 6,000 guns that were later recovered at crime scenes—equivalent to roughly 10% of the guns sold by that dealer. That dealer is still in business and major manufacturers are still supplying it. Compare this scenario to the opioid-maker that keeps sending drugs to a known pill mill.

The industry also fails to keep track of its deadly inventory, fueling illicit markets. ATF reports that over a recent 5 year period, 80,000 guns were reported stolen or missing from licensed gun dealers. These are not missing handbags, they're firearms.

And each year, approximately 380,000 guns are stolen from individuals, homes, and cars and yet the industry considers this someone else's problem.

Had smartphone manufacturers had the same attitude, theft of these devices would still be exceptionally high, but instead they innovated for public safety and these crimes are largely a thing of the past.

So, why is no one holding the gun industry accountable for such patently reckless practices?

In 2005, at the behest of the NRA, Congress passed the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), which insulates the industry from most legal threats.

And, again at the behest of the NRA — Congress passed the Tiahrt Amendment, a budget rider that purports to limit how data about guns used in crimes can be shared, which keeps the industry out of the conversation of how criminals get armed.

In spite of these barriers, I'm heartened that public and private actors in legislatures, city halls, and courts across the country are taking action to reveal the gun industry's role in gun violence and I'm grateful for this Committee's investigation into gun trafficking and its recent subpoenas to gun manufacturers.

Because America hears everyday from the families that have lost their loved ones to gun violence, and our country deserves to hear from the CEOs who are profiting off of their loss and pain.

Thank You