

COVER PAGE

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Violence**

Testimony

National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)

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Terrorism, and Homeland Security

Thursday, December 15, 2022

Committee Chairman, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Ranking Member, Congressman James Jordan, Subcommittee Chairwoman, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Ranking Member, Congressman Andrew Biggs, and committee members, I bring you greetings on behalf of National President Brenda Goss Andrews, who could not be present due to a previous commitment, the Executive Board, members, and constituents of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives – NOBLE.

My name is Anthony Holt, and I am the Special Assistant to President Brenda Goss Andrews and current Chief of Police for Wayne State University Police Department, in Detroit, Michigan. I have served more than 40 years in the law enforcement profession. Since joining the force as a police officer in 1977, I have held multiple positions within the university police department including sergeant, lieutenant, captain and now Chief of Police. It is an honor for NOBLE to provide

written testimony on the topic of “Examining Uvalde: The Search for Bipartisan Solutions to Gun Violence.”

Yesterday, marked the 10th year anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that occurred in Newtown, Connecticut, when 20-year-old Adam Lanza shot and killed 26 people. The vast majority of the victims were children ranging in age from six years old to seven years old. In total, 20 of the 26 victims were children. The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting is the deadliest mass shooting at an elementary school in U.S. history, and the fourth-deadliest mass shooting overall. We at NOBLE released a statement acknowledging the 10th year anniversary and want to again express our heartfelt prayers and condolences to the affected families and communities

Unfortunately, our nation again experienced a mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, TX resulting in the death of nineteen students and two teachers at an elementary school not unlike Sandy Hook Elementary School. We also express our heartfelt prayers and condolences to the affected families and communities of Uvalde, TX.

Of course, there is a difference in time, place, location, victims, and the circumstances leading up to the violent actions of the shooter in both mass

shootings. However, there are certain undeniable elements within our nation that exists during both the Sandy Hook Elementary School and Robb Elementary School shootings. The main one being the lack of an Assault Weapons Ban.

NOBLE is very concerned about the level of gun violence in the United States, and specifically the correlation between violence and the proliferation of assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines. It is our organization's opinion that violence—particularly gun violence is a public health issue. And, as with all public health issues, it demands a comprehensive, nonjudgmental, pragmatic, evidence-based approach to saving lives and reducing injury. NOBLE along with organizations such as the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence (of which we are a member) is committed to addressing the pervasive nature of gun violence and its horrific impact on communities across America. Specifically, firearm-related injuries and deaths to include homicides, suicides, and accidental shootings, is unacceptable and demands immediate attention. Consequently, our National President, Brenda Goss Andrews, has led the effort for NOBLE to launch an initiative titled: "It Starts At Home". The aim of this program is to reduce injuries and deaths due to improper gun storage especially as it relates to the safety of our young children.

Additionally, NOBLE advocates for limiting high-capacity ammunition magazines to ten rounds and the regulation of new semi-automatic assault weapons. In 2016, assault weapons accounted for 1 in 4 police officers killed in the line of duty through gun violence (Violence Policy Center - February 27, 2018). NOBLE supported the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act or Federal Assault Weapons Ban (AWB) of 1994 and the Federal Assault Weapons Ban Reauthorization Act of 2004.

A positive step towards addressing the level of gun violence in our nation was taken with the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. NOBLE supported this legislation. The bill combines gun safety legislation with mental health and school security resources. The bipartisan gun deal increases funding and improves mental health, school safety, crisis intervention and anti-violence programs. Among other things, it requires tougher background checks for younger gun buyers, those who are deemed a risk in certain cases, and closes the so-called “boyfriend loophole,” barring intimate partners who have been convicted of domestic violence crimes against their significant other from having a gun even if they don’t live together. We at NOBLE recommend that in addition to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, that Congress, the Law Enforcement Profession, and communities across this nation work to secure the passage of bipartisan legislation that will at minimum address the following:

- Mandate Universal Background Checks
- Ban Assault Weapons
- Ban High-Capacity Magazines
- Mandate Safe Gun Storage

Lastly, law enforcement plays a central and critical role in preventing gun violence and solving crime. Effective strategies for the strict enforcement of laws concerning the illegal possession, trafficking, and criminal use of firearms are vital, and need to be supported by data, research, technology, training, and best practices. Because the public's health and safety depend on the efforts of law enforcement, agencies must have resources sufficient to prioritize the protection of officers and communities against illegal guns and firearm violence. The crisis of gun violence in our country necessitates a sustained, coordinated, and collaborative effort involving citizens, elected officials, law enforcement, and the entire criminal justice system.

On behalf of the law enforcement leaders of NOBLE and our National President Brenda Goss Andrews, thank you for supporting law enforcement and our ability to maintain public safety while continuing to address the health issue of gun

violence. Our members stand ready to meet the needs of our communities and nation. Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony.