

All

Hello, my name is Dava Kendler, [switch] my name is Oliver Morgan, [switch] my name is Nate Metsch and we are representing URJ 6 Points Sci Tech Academy in Byfield Massachusetts which is a reform jewish science and technology specialty overnight summer camp. [switch] My name is Ben Falk. I am from Andover, Massachusetts and I am a former member of Sci-Tech as well. I am here representing Temple Isaiah in Lexington, Massachusetts. Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us today.

Dava

We are here to talk to you about Gun Violence and its effects. We thank Representative Moltoun [you] for cosponsoring the assault weapons ban (H.R. 698 in the 118th Congress), demonstrating his [your] commitment to protecting American communities and preventing the everlasting trauma of gun violence. We urge him [you] to support the bill when it is reintroduced in the 119th Congress.

Oliver

In the United States, over 48,000 people are killed by guns each year and almost 100,000 people are made to become survivors of gun violence each year. In 2020, guns overtook car accidents to become the leading cause of death for Americans aged 0-19 years old. However, the Assault Weapons Ban was successful at reducing gun violence while it was in effect. In the 15 years following the ban's lapse in 2004, there was a 347 percent increase in fatalities during gun massacres, defined as instances where 6 or more people were killed. Researchers estimate that if the ban was in effect from 2005 to 2019, it would have prevented 30 mass shootings that resulted in 1,478 people being shot.

Ben

Our Jewish education has been very important in shaping our beliefs. As the Torah warns us, “Do not stand idly by while your neighbor’s blood is shed.” We believe that as Jews, it is our duty to fight and resist this unnecessary bloodshed.

I remember the moment I realized that gun violence was something terrible and real. This year, a student threatened to attack my school, Andover High School. I remember feeling panic, fear and confusion as parents rushed to take their children out of school. The student was taken by the police, but the fear remained. Why should students, the youngest and most vulnerable in our society, have to live in fear of murder? We are here because we believe that we are here for a reason, because this is our duty as Jews and as people, and because by helping pass this Bill, we can create a better, safer world. I never realized the danger of gun violence until it could have been too late. I hope our country will not make the same mistake.

Sci-Tech, our summer camp, represents a very special place to all of us. It is a safe haven and a home away from home, where we have the opportunity to spend time with close friends and meet new people. What would we do if this place, this sanctuary for our values and culture, was attacked? In the media, we hear about school shootings across the country. Our nation’s children are forced to watch and wonder: Will we be next?

But not anymore. Just as the Torah warns us, we cannot and will not stand idly. As Jews and as people, we have chosen to resist.

Dava

I have had a unique, outside view of a school shooting. At around 3 o'clock on April 22, 2022, there was an active shooter event at what is now my high school. I was in a school bus half a block down the road, when the glass bridge between the two buildings of my school was shattered by bullets. That was pretty scary just to be nearby to an event such as this, let alone personally being the victim. Being somewhat removed from the shooting allowed me to see the extent of people impacted – crowds who could not enter their homes because of the threat. Our temple canceled Shabbat services that night because of its proximity to my school. And worst of all, one of the security guards was severely wounded and spent months in the hospital fighting for his life.

Nate

These stories are why we are here today: to ask you for your continued support of The Assault Weapons Ban, which would make the possession and distribution of semiautomatic assault weapons illegal. The passage of this bill would also make school shootings less common, and when or if they happen, would significantly limit the amount of damage caused. We urge the Representative to support the reintroduction of The Assault Weapons Ban (HR.698 118th) in the 119th congress.