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Dear Chairman Craven and House Judiciary Committee Members,

As a retired educator, with 40+ years as a teacher and administrator, including ten years as a high school principal, I wish to offer you a different perspective than the usual arguments and data points you receive from both sides of the gun violence debate.

During my tenure as principal, we annually conducted at least 15 “lock down drills” – a euphemism for “active shooter drill”. Doors were locked, shades drawn, lights turned off, and all students were guided to a place in the room out of the line of fire from the doorway. Students had been taught not to cower in fear, but to grab whatever was available to hurl at an intruder who might get through the locked door. So our students, like hundreds of thousands of others, waited attentively, knowing that this was a drill, but forced to imagine what they would do if...

I liken the psychological impact of these repeated drills – which Rhode Island students will go through almost 200 times before they graduate – to the “duck and cover” drills of the 1950s and 1960s. Many of you did not have to endure those drills, conducted regularly, which poised a similarly, and falsely, optimistic scenario in which we were taught that a school desk could provide adequate cover for us in the event of a nuclear attack. Many of my classmates and I lived in terror at the prospect, knowing that even if we made it through alive, what about our parents, brothers and sisters, and friends?

It was more than 20 years after that before our leaders came to the obvious conclusion that nuclear disarmament was a far better option than mutually assured destruction. It is my fervent hope that it doesn't take another 20 years before our leaders arrive at the same grand conclusion, as living through the fear of annihilation as these poor kids sit in a classroom, or in a church, or theater, or shopping mall is as much an assault on them as the violent acts they prepare to face.

The 2nd Amendment does not forbid sensible measures such as the Assault Weapons Ban (H7217) and Safe Storage Act (H7373) before you this Wednesday. Such measures will not only do a much better job of protecting our children's bodies, but their mental health as well.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

God bless,

