



The Rhode Island State
Council of Churches

I am offering testimony in support of H 7217, the Assault Weapons Ban.

Real harm is being done to all of us because of the threat posed by the frequency of mass shootings and the lethality of assault weapons, when used. **You don't have to be shot, by an assault rifle, to be harmed. The threat is sufficient.** The lethality of assault weapons amplifies the threat.

We know the threat is real, so we take steps to mitigate the potential damage. One example is active shooter drills. We do active shooter drills because we know the threat is real. They are done in numerous places... churches, schools, hospitals. With the good intention of protecting them, we put our children through active shooter drills.

How effective they are for children is not clear but the one thing that is clear is trauma does occur. (1) It doesn't happen to every kid...and not to the same degree...but too frequently kids are having a trauma reaction. While there is research that demonstrates this, as a Pastor, I know this from personal experience. Congregants and many of my clergy colleagues know first hand that trauma happens.

Is it a coincidence that currently there is a child mental health crisis and a youth suicide crisis in America?

The answer to avoid traumatizing our children is not to stop doing active shooter drills. The real answer is to get rid of the reason we have drills in the first place. Stop the proliferation of guns, especially weapons of war.

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(1) Paccione-Dyszlewski. Targeted school violence: Timely research needed for prevention. The Brown Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter. July 2020. p.8....