

I never imagined I would be standing here today in the Statehouse. A place that I have driven pass, walked pass for a good number of years until after the murders of my daughter Jenea and son Donell on April 1, 2015. While trying understand the why, how, when, and where of a horrific time in my life. I also had to become instantly educated in the law (yes, that includes our current gun laws), my children's rights, my grandchildren's rights, and my own rights as victims of gun violence. I have never been against a person owning a gun to protect his/herself, their families and their homes.

However, allowing HB178 to pass scares me. We have all seen, heard, and read about the number of senseless lives lost due to the careless use of a gun. As much as we say guns don't harm people; people harm people. Yes, that is true because someone has to pull the trigger. This is why I am against HB 178 to give a person that much freedom to react instead of response to someone else action just does make any sense to me. Let me share some of the affects of gun violence after you have a buried your love one. Two death certificates that I still carry around, a copy of court order guardianship papers, 3 years of court dates (family, criminal and my new relationship with probate court, & two attorneys) my attorney and my grandchildren's guardianship/administer. A therapist for myself, a therapist for my grandchildren, I'm still trying to convince my children to go to counseling. Debt, and medical bills.

I use to be simply a daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, friend, and co-worker. Now, I am identified as the mother of 2 deceased children, kinship caregiver, advocate, speaker, community leader all because a young man who I loved, a part of my family, a college graduated with an associate degree and a bachelor degree, a young man with no

criminal record, no recorded mental illness, and a great job. A kid who had beat the odds and met all the necessary legal requirements to own and possess a hand gun took a 9mm handgun and per the words of our prosecutor Ron O'Brien he executed my 23 year old son as he sat in a parked car and my 29 year old daughter as she watched her brothers life be taken and then her own life was taken. A total of 7 bullets killed two of my children. Seventeen shell casings were reported found in the parking lot on Parsons on April 1, 2015.

I never thought I have a life- long membership to a group were the only requirement to join is to have lost a child. HB178 would increase the membership to this group. Over the last 4 years I have built relationships with people near and far because I am a bereaved mother that I would have never met had I not had this experience. As grateful as I am for the opportunity to have some amazing people in my life and to be in the room with you today. I wish I could trade in every good experience that I have had and have Jenea and Donell here with me. I am not here to debate the right to possess a gun. I am here to remind each of you of a "New Normal" life myself and many others live because of what gun violence does even when you have done everything right. I until about 2 weeks I had never even ask where did he get the gun that took my 2 of my children's lives. Now I struggle with do I really want to know the answer? I struggle with trying to explain to people to my 6-year-old granddaughter I am biologically her grandmother, legally her guardian, in her eyes I'm mommy. Praying that as my only 2 grandsons grow up and learn the truth that one cousin's father took the life of the other cousin's father that the bond of love; they have for each other today remains strong and will carry them through that part of their live. That my grandson does not get label because he is name after his father. How do I heal the hurt that's in my heart and my other 2 children's heart because we miss them so

much? As each of you go back to your office and finish your work day and you home to your families. Think about if you to walk just one mile in my shoes on any give day after April 1, 2015 could sleep with HB178 and some of the other current gun laws? I shared this quote last week in a stakeholder workshop for changes to Kinship, foster care and adoption programs and it still relatable today” The changes are not happening at the same pace as the trauma that is happening to our families.”