

Dear Chairman Barker and members of the Federal and State Affairs Committee:

The school day at Highlands Elementary School in Mission, KS on Friday March 1 ended for over 300 children, countless parents, teachers, school staff, and police officers with an active shooter being shot by police officers while parents were picking up their kids from school.

I was at home with a sick child when I got the email that the school was on lockdown and everyone should stay away. Do you know what that feels like? The panic that slowly rises up in your throat? The possibility that the very worst has finally made its way to your children's school? To have a child potentially in harm's way and no way to protect them, to tell them you love them or to reassure them that they are safe?? To hear that there is a van with it's windows shot out in the parking lot and that the building was hit? That one of the bullets entered your child's classroom? To find out later that your son was at recess when the first shots were fired? Do you know what that feels like? Unfortunately, I am among the growing numbers of people who do.

My friends, neighbors, family, and I can be counted as the lucky ones. We tucked our children in to bed that night. Our sons and daughters get to have their last basketball games. We get to sit in the stands to cheer them on. We are the lucky ones. It feels absurd to say that we are the lucky ones to have survived gun violence! We will never be the same. Gun violence has finally made its way into our lives. We can no longer see it on the news and wonder when. It's too late for that.

This is not the first time gun violence has hit my neighborhood. In June of 2009, a woman was shot in the head by her estranged husband while she was at work painting one of my neighbor's homes. She had filed a protective order against him. What was he doing with a gun? That was 11 years ago and still nothing has changed.

Now is the time for action, and I am calling on you to start writing legislation that actually matters and that will actually save lives. We will support you and stand by you and help you. We will celebrate you when you decide enough is enough and it's time to make a real difference. Please. I'm begging you.

This is literally a matter of life and death. Our children stand to lose the most. Don't think for a second that this won't change the way people in Northern Johnson County vote. I am now a one issue voter – gun sense. If you don't support it, I won't support you. Too close to home was actually home this time. Who will it be next week? Will they be able to count themselves as the lucky ones?

Please oppose HB 2326! Perhaps a bill like SB 183 - a Red Flag Bill would have kept this situation from happening? Please support common sense gun laws!!

Sincerely,

Leslie Eakes

Fairway, KS