

I am asking this committee to indulge me for a few moments and come on a journey with me.

Close your eyes to picture this if you may.

Imagine that you were born with only one arm.

You grew up with one arm. You learned how to do everything with only one arm. You were entirely capable. In fact, you had no idea that you were different at all because all the other little kids had only one arm too.

You grew up, became an adult, became yourself and started your life as a grownup.

And then one day, you woke up, and you were growing a right arm out of your shoulder.

It got bigger and bigger until you had two full size arms

And your world was radically different.

You could do so many more things with two arms. Your extra arm made you so happy. You felt so much more capable. It wasn't perfect and some things were hard because they weren't what you were used to. But ...

You loved your new arm. More than anything you had ever loved before. The joy you experienced having this new arm was like no joy you'd ever felt. You couldn't even remember what your life was like before because it seemed so blank. Your world began when you had your new arm.

And then, one day ... an accident.

A horrible, preventable accident that didn't have to happen.

You lose your new arm.

You are suddenly traumatized. Angry. In despair. In grief.

People tell you you can just go back to the way things were before. They tell you "time heals all wounds." They don't understand. They don't know that things will never be the same for you. That you'll never "get over it."

That your grief will be a back breaking load that you will carry your entire life.

A grief caused by something that didn't have to happen. Something not inevitable, something controvertible, something preventable. It didn't have to be this way. You didn't have to live like this.

This is what it is like to lose someone you love most. This is a story that reflects the stories of my friends – Gina Pelusi, Laura Fletcher, Aleida Garcia, Roz Pichardo, Terrez McCleary, Dr. Dorothy, Yullio Robbins, Lisa Espinosa, Jen Lugar. All of them have suffered loss because of a gun.

It didn't have to be this way.

Wait it out. Be patient. This too shall pass.

Are these things that survivors hear about their grief?

Maybe. But they're also things that gun rights groups told gun rights politicians to do in the days after Uvalde.

Wait it out, deflect questions ... people will forget and move on.

Well, guess what. We haven't moved on. We didn't before and we never will again. Not when our children are most at risk because of a gun. The number one killer of children in America today. Not childhood cancer. Not drowning. Not car accidents.

Guns.

I can guarantee you that the tens of thousands of volunteers in Pennsylvania with Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America will do one thing when it comes to common sense gun legislation: we will keep going. And we won't stop until we end gun violence in Pennsylvania.

With this new gun sense majority in the House, we know we can do more. Moms Demand Action volunteers in Pennsylvania stand ready to support this committee on their efforts to reduce gun deaths in Pennsylvania.

Joyce Pickles

Legislative and Elections Lead

MomsDemand Action for Gun Sense in America - Philadelphia Region

412.603.0122

joyce.s.pickles@gmail.com

momsdemandphiladelphia@gmail.com