

My name is Jean Markey-Duncan and I am the Vermont Representative to the Northeast Justice Council of the Sisters of Mercy and a 43 year resident of Burlington. I was the lead organizer for an interfaith prayer and remembrance vigil for the victims of gun violence, titled "A Moral Call: People of Faith Confronting the Tragedy of Gun Violence", which was co-sponsored by seventeen Chittenden County faith communities and held in December, during the busiest time of the year, on the anniversary weekend of the Newtown shootings.

We expected to attract 100 people or so, but instead, three hundred people showed up! Faith leaders of multiple traditions were involved. Additionally, one-third of those attending committed to engaging deeper on this issue. This is significant, in that it points to a quiet but deeply held concern on the part of many Vermonters regarding guns and the common good.

H. 566, 67 and 68 are about gun violence prevention and safety in Vermont's largest city. Burlington citizens are proactive on these issues because we have experienced gun violence and want to nip it in the bud. We understand the link between gun trafficking and the opiate crisis, we understand the link between guns left unattended and the successful completion of a suicide or a child's accidental death, we understand that in a domestic violence situation the most dangerous time for the abused is the time between the report and the accused's court date, and with 122 first class liquor licenses issued in the City, we understand that guns and alcohol cannot be allowed to mix, especially in the presence of so many young university students. These ordinances have the potential to save lives in our community.

Some say these charter changes represent a "patchwork" approach to gun regulations. When it comes to life safety, the uniqueness of a community must be considered. One precedent I can think of are our building codes where local codes are often stricter than those of the state's.

On Town Meeting Day 2014, in an otherwise unremarkable election year, the people of Burlington spoke overwhelmingly. Recognizing our unique place in the state as a regional center and an economic engine, we chose prevention to maintain the peace and harmony of our community. An unprecedented two-thirds of Burlington voters passed three gun safety Charter Change measures despite a massive and well-heeled campaign to squash them. This is the kind of voter expression that needs to be honored here today. Vote to pass these bills out of committee and onto the House floor.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Testimony given by: Jean Markey-Duncan, VT Rep., Northeast Justice Council, Sisters of Mercy
To: House Government Operations Committee
Date: Jan. 28, 2016