



Stowe Middle School  
CONSTRUCT | EXPRESS | ACT

To: Sen. Baruth, Sen. Balint, Sen. Benning, Sen. Bray, Sen. Ingram, Sen. Whitney, Rep. Sharpe, Rep. Pearce, Rep. Webb, Rep. Beck, Rep. Conion, Rep. Cupoli, Rep. Giambatista, Rep. Joseph, Rep. Long, Rep. Mattos, and Rep. Miller.

Materials Submitted by: Alaena Hunt, 8th Grader, Stowe Middle School

- Testimony for March 21st, 2018
- Petition signed by 262 Stowe Middle High School Students.

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### **Testimony for March 21st, 2018**

Hello, my name is Alaena Hunt. You may remember me from the last session, when I served as a legislative page. I am an 8th grader and I attend Stowe Middle School. Like Rep. Giambatista, I am a lifelong Vermonter. As a Vermonter, I have learned a few things in my life. For example, winter is not over until Mother Nature decides you have been through enough, maple syrup always tastes best when it has just been boiled, and last but not least, Vermonters are some of the most level headed and strongest people I know.

I look around this room and I am inspired. I see Representatives who are also school teachers, like Rep. Beck, a retired Principal like Rep. Pearce, and a School Board Chair like Rep. Long. I am proud of this little state, with all of the wonders it holds, and that is why I know that we can be a role model in the nation's gun debate issue. I look in this room and I see role models like Senator Balint. Senator Balint: You are a leader. When I served as a legislative page, you demonstrated energy. You are a graduate of Harvard with a Masters of Education. You are both a teacher, and a parent.

Gun violence is a problem that is plaguing our nation, and most people agree that it needs to be fixed. To solve this problem, a number of changes should be made. We should raise the age requirement to buy a gun from 18 to 21. We should implement more enhanced background checks. I also think that for me to feel safe in my own school, there needs to be stronger restrictions to the access of assault rifles and semi-automatic rifles. We need to consider the

different ways in which people would lose access to their guns, such as domestic violence cases when guns are present in the home.

My classmates are scared and so am I. I do not want to be scared to go to my own school. And I definitely do not want my parents to be scared to send my brother, who is only in 5th grade, and me to school every morning.

Just yesterday, another school shooting occurred in Maryland. How do I know my school is not going to be next? **HOW WILL YOU TAKE ACTION TO KEEP ME SAFE IN SCHOOL?**

Last week, I helped my school organize our walkout. When my school participated in the nationwide walkout, almost the entire school went outside in the freezing cold to show their support. As we read the names of the students who were killed, and shared facts about gun control, I looked around at all my classmates and realized how much they all mean to me. My school is small ... so even when a classmate moves away it is a big deal. I cannot imagine any of my friends dying.

I have gotten to know every one of my classmates, and they all have such complicated and amazing lives. One of my classmates lost her camp counselor in the shooting at Parkland, and even though I did not know him personally, it made the situation so much more real for me. This is actually happening. The lives of my classmates are at stake. I will not feel safe until there are more restrictions on guns. I am only 14 years old, so I cannot solve this problem alone. But, I do know that we cannot continue to go to school in fear.

I am proud to be a Vermonter, but right now I am less proud to be an American. Vermont has a history of taking a leading role when implementing changes and we should be a leader for other states as we face this problem. For example, in 1777, Vermont was the first state to ban slavery. Vermont was the first state to legalize marijuana through the legislative system just this year. I feel strongly that we can, and should, be a leader in the gun violence epidemic.

Calvin Coolidge once said, "I love Vermont because of her hills and valleys, her scenery and invigorating climate, but most of all because of her indomitable people. They are a race of pioneers who have almost beggared themselves to serve others. If the spirit of liberty should vanish in other parts of the Union, and support of our institutions should languish, it could all be replenished from the generous store held by the people of this brave little state of Vermont."

Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to me.