

January 18, 2008 speech before the House Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee

Good morning. My name is Lu Ann Maciulla McNabb.

The night of April 16, I had to look my children in the eye and tell them that their best friend and sister, Reema Samaha, had not made it.

That Thursday, I held my dearest friend, Mona, and helped her choose the clothes and jewelry Reema would wear for eternity.

That Saturday, I touched Reema's hands, face and hair for the last time. I kissed her forehead and reassured Mona that she was still beautiful – even though blood clots marred her otherwise perfect face. You see, Reema had escaped a collapsed lung, a bombing in Beirut, but was gunned down in a Virginia classroom.

Think back on the recent holiday and imagine celebrating it without one of your children or grandchildren. These families endured the first of many; for some, there will never be a grandchild. For all, there will no longer be joy.

I cannot begin to tell this panel the ramifications of Reema and Erin Peterson's death on our community, especially on our young people, many of whom are seeking psychological counseling, as they struggle to understand why their friends died so young and so violently. So many members of our community are grappling with depression, lack of focus, and anxiety because of these murders. And that costs all of us.

What most disturbs me is the political posturing that is occurring here – scheduling this hearing on the Friday before the Monday when members of this panel knew Virginia Tech parents were coming to Richmond to talk on this very issue, and not as likely to appear on such short notice. Likening a simple request to require that a criminal history record check prior to transferring a gun at a gun show, as designated in HB 592 and HB 745, is tantamount to “taking away guns” or interfering with one's “liberty”. We are disturbed that a simple background check, which takes minutes, is considered “inconvenient” or “costly” or a “Northern Virginia” issue. A background check, pure and simple, is insuring that a person who buys a gun is a law-abiding citizen. Period. Not a convicted felon. Not someone deemed dangerous to himself or others. Not someone with a protective order against him. Not a terrorist. I would think that this committee, tasked with the three objectives of militia, police and public safety, would concern itself with the latter as much as it does to protect the former.

Yes, I understand Seung Hui Cho did not buy his guns from a gun show. But he could have and someone else can. It only takes one.

My question, to you, is how many more have to die before you pass commonsense legislation that protects our children and our communities.

We do not wish to take away guns or prevent law-abiding citizens from owning them for sport, hunting, collection or self-defense. We just want you to look into the eyes of these families and tell them that the cost and inconvenience of a background check is greater than the loss they endured. We just want you to pass legislation that protects the citizens of this Commonwealth.