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December 21, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Joseph Biden, Jr.
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20501

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
Office of the Speaker
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
House of Representatives
235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Newtown, Connecticut

Dear President Obama, Vice President Biden, Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid and Leader McConnell:

I write to you to as our country engages in a necessary dialogue following the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut.

It is my great hope and expectation that the events of December 14, 2012 will lead to action at the federal level. Among the steps that I urge the Administration and Congress to take are:

- Renewing a meaningful and comprehensive assault weapons ban;
- Banning high-capacity ammunition magazines; and
- Closing loopholes to ensure that all purchasers of firearms at gun shows undergo a background check prior to purchase, regardless of the seller.



These are by no means the only steps, but they should be three of the immediate steps taken to quell the unacceptable level of gun violence in our country and to help prevent the tragic loss of innocent lives.

Strong gun laws make a difference. In Massachusetts, we have passed some of the strictest gun laws of any state and we have one of the lowest rates of gun deaths in the country.

Gun laws alone will not solve this problem, however.

That is why we must also address mental health care in our country. I've seen first-hand the many challenges we face in treating and supporting those grappling with mental illness. I lost my brother to suicide after his long battle with mental illness. Our family struggled deeply with how to help him, and that is a struggle shared by many families across the nation. We must take steps to end the stigma of mental illness, tear down the barriers to treatment, and ensure that health care parity is a reality. We also must ensure that access to mental health treatment is available in emergency and non-emergency situations.

The time is overdue for national action on firearms, mental health, and community safety to help prevent future tragedies. I pledge to support those efforts in any way that I can. As the President said at the Newtown vigil, "Surely, we can do better than this."

Cordially,



Martha Coakley
Massachusetts Attorney General