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To: Chair Ron Latz, Vice Chair Zaynab Mohamed, and the Minnesota Senate Gun Violence Prevention Working Group,

I write as the coordinator for local Chapter 27, Veterans For Peace, Sane Gun Laws group in support of the proposal by the "Minnesota Medical Association Pro," especially their statement urging "law makers to pass a full, state-wide ban of assault rifles and high-capacity magazines."

We are all still shocked that, in just a few minutes, a shooter, using his legally acquired assault rifle, fired 117 high-powered, military rounds into Annunciation Church killing 2 children and wounding 23 people including 20 children. It has reawakened fear in all of us for our children and grandchildren.

I want to make it clear that those who are opposed to this ban have been fed lies and half-truths since the 1970s. I understand their love of their weapons. For a year, my assault rifle or my .45 were always within my reach. But I was serving in a war zone for that year in Vietnam as a combat Marine.

In contrast, Senators, I come with information, not the falsehoods that our epidemic of gun violence can only be solved by more guns, the deadlier the better. Or the lie that the registration of assault weapons called for in past bills is actually confiscation. Or the lie that the Second Amendment gives people the right to own weapons of war. Or the absurd notion that we should eliminate gun-free zones and have more guns in our schools.¹ Or the oft-repeated statement meant to distract that "it's not a gun issue; it's a mental health issue," or that antidepressants (SSRIs)² are at the root of mass shootings.³

¹ Comments by MN Sen. Glen Gruenhagen.

² SSRI stand for Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI) are a class of medications used to treat mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

³ According to a recent article in *Psychiatric Times*, "there is little or no evidence showing that perpetrators of mass shootings are more likely than those in the general public to have used, or to have been prescribed, antidepressants prior to the shooting." Source: "No, Antidepressants Do Not Provoke Mass Shootings,"

James L. Knoll IV, MD, Ronald W. Pies, MD, *Psychiatric Times*, 9/12/25,
<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/view/no-antidepressants-do-not-provoke-mass-shootings#>

In support of the proposal by the “Minnesota Medical Association Pro,” urging “law makers to pass a full, state-wide ban of assault rifles and high-capacity magazines.”

We know that assault weapons with high-capacity magazines are the weapon of choice for most mass shooters,⁴ and that bans can be effective and save lives by denying these weapons of war to potential shooters,⁵ whatever their state of mind.

A recent study compared mass shootings in the US over two-decades to those in 35 similarly developed countries. It concluded that shootings in the US averaged 109 times more than in the other countries.⁶ Our mental health problems aren’t 109 times greater than in those 35 countries. Our epidemic of mass shootings is a direct result of our lax gun laws, and especially our unique availability of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.

Claiming it’s a mental health issue is just a dodge. The Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans cut \$11.4 billion from various mental and behavioral health services that Democrats in Congress were able to approve over Republican opposition during the prior four years. Blaming inadequate mental health services is just bait-and-switch propaganda from the gun lobby and the NRA.

To argue that AR-15-style rifles are not “weapons of war,” is ridiculous. When firing either military or civilian ammunition, they are actually *more powerful* than the military’s standard M4 assault rifle. What is more important is that this ammunition can tumble upon impact, which makes them horribly deadly. As one emergency room doctor described it, the effects on a victim “looks like a grenade went off in the body.”⁷

You’ve heard from medical professionals about their heroic efforts to save the victims of the horrific shooting at Annunciation Church and School. I also know, first-hand, the carnage these weapons of war cause.

⁴ Source: Giffords, https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/hardware-ammunition/assault-weapons/#footnote_1_5603.

⁵ When our country had an assault-weapons ban from 1994-2004, the risk of dying in a mass shooting was 70% lower than in the following decade after Congress killed the effort to extend it. Source: “Did the assault weapons ban of 1994 bring down mass shootings? Here’s what the data tells us,” Michael J. Klein, Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery, New York University, *The Conversation*, 6/8/22, <https://theconversation.com/did-the-assault-weapons-ban-of-1994-bring-down-mass-shootings-heres-what-the-data-tells-us-184430>

⁶ Source: “Public Mass Shootings Around the World: Prevalence, Context, and Prevention,” Jason R. Silva, 2/20/24, *Rockefeller Institute of Government*, <https://rockinst.org/blog/public-mass-shootings-around-the-world-prevalence-context-and-prevention/>

⁷ Source: “What an AR-15 Can Do to the Human Body: When a patient is shot by an AR-15, it ‘looks like a grenade went off in there,’” Sarah Zhang, *Wired*, 6/17/16, <https://www.wired.com/2016/06/ar-15-can-human-body/>

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I’m still haunted by the memory of two young Vietnamese boys who were shot by my fellow Marines after they set off a bomb on our fire support base. I witnessed, up close, how the M16 rounds literally shredded and exploded their little bodies.

In closing, let me repeat: It’s about the guns, not some not some imaginary Second Amendment right to buy weapons of war. And it’s about our citizens—especially our children—and the lives that would be saved by this ban. Guns or kids. The Choice is yours.

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