

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:00 PM ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023

Scarborough, Maine
December 14, 2023
12:00 p.m. ET

Maine Faith Leaders Gather Again at Cabela's to Remember Children Slain at Sandy Hook

Maine faith leaders gather a second time this month at Cabela's in Scarborough, ME, to commemorate 11 years since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, CT, when a 20 year-old killed 26 people – most of them children under age 7. The group of faith leaders, called Thoughts and Prayers in Action (TPA), first convened for a prayer circle at Cabela's on Saturday, December 2, in the wake of last month's mass shooting in Lewiston, ME.

Driven by religious conviction, TPA calls upon Cabela's and its parent company, Bass Pro Shops, to take the following actions:

1. Cease the sale of AR-15-style assault rifles.
2. Discontinue the sale of high-capacity (over 10 rounds) magazine clips.
3. Raise the minimum age for all firearms sales from 18 to 21.

"I grew up near Sandy Hook, and the horrors of December 2012 are very much with me," says interfaith chaplain Amos Liston of Portland. "As a 20 year-old, Adam Lanza could have legally purchased the AR-15 he used to kill 26 individuals at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Because 18-20 year-olds commit gun homicides at triple the rate of adults over 21, raising the minimum age for firearms purchases could save untold lives."

While mass shootings are a particularly visible form of gun violence, TPA's faith leaders hope that changes by Bass Pro Shops could decrease homicides and suicides, as well. Says Rev. Jodi Cohen Hayashida of Auburn: "Every life cut short by gun violence is a tragedy. Everyday violence and heartbreaking gun accidents have resulted in over 39,400 U.S. deaths in 2023 alone."

The parents of the murdered Sandy Hook Elementary School children have overwhelmingly called for more responsible and selective gun ownership. "The children murdered in Newtown would've been high school seniors this year," says Leslie Manning, a Durham Quaker. "We call upon Johnny Morris, CEO, and the board of Bass Pro Shops to use their power so that no more children's lives are ended by weapons of war. It's time to prioritize lives over guns."

After previous mass shootings, Cabela's competitors Dick's Sporting Goods, Wal-Mart, and Kroger ceased the sale of AR-15-style assault rifles. The U.S. is projected to suffer a record-breaking 700+ mass shootings in 2023 – a figure that may encourage American apathy toward preventable deaths.

After this gathering, TPA plans to continue advocacy efforts against the sale of AR 15-style assault rifles in Maine. More information about TPA's invitation to Bass Pro Shops can be found at thoughtsprayersaction.org.

###

Ophelia Hu Kinney
(978) 504-2006
tpa.maine@gmail.com