

Alice Cain: I promise to work on these four ways to combat gun violence



Alice Cain is a Democratic candidate for delegate in District 30A. She has been designated as a “Gun Sense Candidate” by Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. (Courtesy photo)

By **Alice Cain**

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At a recent matinee with my kids, my son leaned over as the movie was starting and whispered, “Mom, don’t forget to look for the exits, just in case there’s a shooter and we have to escape.”

I froze as I realized that seeking an escape route in public places is “normal” for kids today. The only world they have ever known is one where mass shootings can happen anytime, anywhere — in a movie theater, at school, at church, at a concert, walking down the street, or — as Annapolis knows all too well — in a newsroom.

The statistics are staggering: The number of mass shootings in the United States so far this year is 248, and 94 of them occurred since the murders at our community’s newspaper. Gerald, John, Rebecca, Rob and Wendi are five of the 10,051 other victims of gun violence in the U.S. in 2018. No wonder my son was looking for escape exits.

One of the reasons I decided to run for office is so I can help build a safer community for all of our children. The voice that has most echoed in my head as I think about how to do so is the voice of one of Wendi Winters' daughters at a recent forum. Her message was clear: She said she doesn't want pity but action. If elected, I commit to taking action in the following ways:

First, we must act to address the grave new threat of online access to plans that allow anyone to use a 3D printer to anonymously build untraceable guns that cannot be detected by metal detectors. Since easy access to 3D-printed guns negates public safety laws designed to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and terrorists, Maryland joined seven states in a lawsuit to block President [Donald Trump](#)'s administration's actions to allow these guns to be built — but courts can be slow and lives are at stake. [Maryland House Speaker Michael E. Busch](#) has said he will make legislation to address this threat a top priority in January. I will vote for the measure and do everything else I can to ensure it passes.

Second, we must close loopholes that allow some stalkers and domestic abusers to buy guns. A full 20 percent of mass shooters have a record of domestic violence involving the courts. Maryland's new "red flag" law will help but needs to be strengthened.

Originally crafted as a suicide prevention measure, it allows law enforcement and courts to temporarily restrict access to guns to people who show they are a danger to themselves or others. But those authorized to "raise the red flag" are very limited and, in many cases, do not include stalking victims. We must close this loophole.

Third, Maryland must close the loophole that allows people with a history of violent behavior and confinement in a mental health facility to buy a gun. [Maryland State Police](#) require gun purchasers to disclose if they have been in a mental health facility for more than 30 days — but staying for 29 days or less does not trigger the disclosure requirement.

Fourth, we must ensure that the effort by Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to arm classroom teachers never takes root in Maryland. Teachers in Maryland and across the country — including teachers from my nonprofit organization, Teach Plus — have organized against the administration's efforts to allow federal education dollars to be used to purchase guns for classrooms. But the Trump administration has not listened to our teachers. If elected, I will do everything I can to ensure we pass legislation that prohibits Maryland from using any federal or state education dollars to purchase guns for our teachers.

These actions would improve public safety without compromising the rights of responsible gun owners. But better laws are not enough. My mentor and former boss, U.S. Sen. Paul Simon, often said the fundamental divide in our society is between people who have hope and those who have given up. People who resort to gun violence are often people who have given up.

Building a society that offers hope for a better future for everyone can help prevent gun violence. It is a goal we can work toward together, not just through legislation but through partnerships with community organizations that are leading the way. We can prioritize mental health services for students and families, including in our schools and at [Anne Arundel Medical Center](#); more accessible treatment for addicts; more safe, affordable

housing; expanded job training opportunities, including career and technical education for non-college-bound students; and excellent schools for all students regardless of neighborhood.

In a recent op-ed, Carl Hiassen said he and his brother, Rob, spoke of gun violence “as fathers trying to figure out what kind of country we were leaving to our children, and their children.” It’s exactly the right question. Only by asking it, and then coming together to provide better answers than we’re providing now, will we give our children the future they deserve.

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