

The remarks below are as prepared for delivery for Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman on March 14, 2018 on the House floor.

Thank you M____ Speaker.

I stand today in solidarity with my colleagues, with parents and students, and with Americans across the country who are calling for action to address the crisis of gun violence.

Over the weekend, I had the opportunity to connect with nearly 150 students and their families in my district at a Town Hall meeting. I listened to their personal worries and worst fears. I heard their thoughts and the solutions they want decision makers here in Washington to consider. I felt the emotional strain of wondering if their own classrooms were safe. Above all else, I heard the question why?

Why can't we limit access to military-style weapons specifically built to maximize damage?

Why can't we improve the background check process?

Why won't Congress *act*?

The President recently set forward a series of empty proposals that continue our practice of shrinking away from these questions. Arming teachers, school personnel and volunteers is dangerous, ill conceived, and does nothing to solve the problems we have with gun violence. To keep our children safe we need fewer guns, not more. And in backing away from his initial pledges to limit access, the President again prioritized the interests of the National Rifle Association over the pleas of countless students, teachers and parents.

In fact, he has demonstrated that he is afraid of the NRA.

The wish for safe spaces to learn was clear in the comments I heard from my constituents on Saturday – young people who want to walk through the hallways of their schools feeling nurtured instead of afraid. Stashing pistols in their teachers' desks isn't going to bring them that feeling.

If the administration, or the leaders controlling what we debate on the floor of this Congress, were actually interested in protecting our schools, we would be debating legislation to strengthen background checks. We'd be working on increasing the firearm purchasing age to 21. We'd be banning assault rifles. We'd be limiting and tracking excessive ammunition purchases, and much more.

There are bills to do all of these things, ready and waiting for debate — including my own. All we need is for the Speaker to show the will and courage to put young lives ahead of the gun lobby.

While much of my Town Hall meeting was centered on anxiety and fear, I left the event filled with an overwhelming sense of pride and hope. Pride in a generation of future leaders who have endured an endless and unbearable stream of school shootings and are stepping up to the plate to hold their leaders accountable. Hope that we can finally agree on a path of action and their voices will be heard.

I will continue to lift those voices here with my colleagues, and fight with them for action and change.

Thank you, I yield back the balance of my time.