

Submitter: Bill Denham
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3075

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallen, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Bill Denham and I am writing to urge your support for House Bill 3076. It is a critical policy that will prevent firearm tragedies and save lives.

All of us should be safe from violent gun crimes in our neighborhoods, no matter our race, income, or zip codes. Just as food safety rules at restaurants and hygiene requirements in nail salons work to keep us healthy, we ought to have gun shop regulations to keep us safe.

Holding gun dealers to basic standards of safety and theft prevention is critical to the broader effort to prevent gun tragedies and protect our communities.

I have witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of gun violence. On September 4, 2008, Matthew Solomon and his friend, Noel Espinoza, were shot and killed while waiting at a bus stop in San Francisco's Mission District. In March 2018, Homeland Security arrested Luis, Josue, and Eddy for their murders.

Although Matthew wasn't legally my stepson, I had been a parental figure in his life since his adoption by my first wife, Susan, and her second husband, Ken. When the police called me the day after his death, my first reaction was deep sadness—not just for Matthew, but for the young men who had taken his life. I thought, "They have no hope."

I processed my grief through poetry, which led to my book, *Looking for Matthew* (2012).

In 2018, after hearing about the arrests, I contacted the defense attorneys, troubled that the young men faced the death penalty. I testified in a successful appeal to have the death penalty waived. In August 2024, I met Luis in a guided conversation. He expressed deep remorse for his actions, which deprived Matthew's sons of their father. The judge considered his transformation and gave him the shortest sentence of the three.

Luis was part of the Soreños gang at the time. The attack was retaliation for the murder of a rival gang leader earlier that day. An informant wrongly identified Matthew and Noel as members of the rival gang.

Stronger gun control could prevent tragedies like this. It shouldn't be so easy for gangs to arm themselves.

We must stop the flow of guns being used for crime in our communities. Gun dealer licensing is a proven solution to violent gun crimes that has already been passed in 17 states. Research shows gun dealer licensing reduces gun diversions for criminal activity by 60% and homicides by almost 40%.

Passing HB 3076 will make our communities safer places to live, work, learn and play. I urge you to vote yes.

Sincerely,
Bill Denham