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Body

When I became Dean and President of New York Law School, I never imagined I'd be consoling victims of gun violence almost every semester. After the June 2016 Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando, I listened in horror and sadness as a student told me about the murder of two close friends. Three months ago, after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, I consoled another student who lost friends. And over the past two years, I have comforted two additional students who each lost a brother to horrendous gun accidents.

I began seeing our school's connection to the gun violence epidemic just a few weeks into my role as Dean. In July 2012, a gunman in Aurora, Colorado, shot and killed 12 people and injured dozens of others at a movie theater. I soon learned that the Aurora Police Chief was a graduate of our Class of 1986. He would go on to supervise the criminal investigation that followed the shooting. After every one of these violent acts, I write to students and faculty reminding them to maintain perspective, to take the long view, and to remember they are training to be advocates for meaningful change. But after the Parkland shooting, my words started to seem hollow. If now wasn't the time for me and my community to do something, then when? And then came Santa Fe.

As the son of a police officer, I have long known that none of us is immune from America's gunviolence epidemic. The Washington Post recently reported that 2018 has been deadlier for students than for deployed service members. This fact demands that our school-like every elementary school, high school, and higher education institution in the country have active-shooter procedures in place. It ensures that all of us who work in education have worst-case scenarios in the back of our minds, all the time.

Before I became Dean of New York Law School, I spent a decade as Counselor to former New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. All of us who worked at City Hall saw first-hand the devastating effects of gun violence and were frustrated by the patchwork of permissive laws that enabled illegal gun trafficking into the city.

The organization Mayor Bloomberg founded, Everytown for Gun Safety, is the largest gun violence prevention organization in the country. This fall, New York Law School and Everytown will launch the nation's first law school clinic exclusively dedicated to gun violence prevention advocacy (though other law schools have done highly admirable work in this area). It's an ideal match: Everytown brings expertise and experience undertaking gun safety reforms that

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have earned widespread support, like keeping guns away from domestic abusers and other people who pose an imminent risk. And, in turn, our law school offers a critical resource: smart and driven students, eager to dig in with specialized legal training to help make an impact in state capitals nationwide.

In addition, drawing inspiration from the extraordinary survivors of the Parkland shooting, New York Law School students will train students at our partner in the Bronx, The Charter High School for Law and Social Justice, in a new gun violence prevention advocacy program. As we know from the Parkland movement, high school students have remarkable power to create social change.

We in legal education are in an unprecedented era of student engagement, in a time of desperate need for a new generation of leaders to step up. Many of us are seizing this opportunity and finding innovative ways for our students to be part of real and lasting change at the national, state, and local levels. Empowering future generations of advocates and lawmakers to jump into the debate and fight for change now, rather than to simply wait their turn, is the best way to challenge the entrenched interests of those who would weaken our civil society and our rule of law. If the combined efforts of law students, advocates, legislators and the public succeed, one day I might not have to console as many grieving students. I hope that day comes soon.

ANTHONY W. CROWELL is dean and president of New York Law School.

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