

*Rep. Barbara Hernandez (D-83)*

One year ago, on February 15, 2019, a disgruntled former employee of the Henry Pratt Company plant in Aurora opened fire inside the company warehouse, killing five employees and wounding another.

The gunman responsible for this heinous act of terror should never have been issued a FOID card. He was able to obtain the gun he used to wound and kill innocent victims through a loophole in our Firearm Owners Identification (FOID) system, that allowed the shooter to obtain a FOID card despite an aggravated assault conviction that should have caused him to fail his background check.

We can prevent senseless and tragic shootings like these from happening in our state by strengthening the FOID system. But we must take action.

In honor of the one-year anniversary of this tragedy in Aurora, I will be filing a resolution in support of The BIO (Block Illegal Gun Ownership) Bill, Senate Bill 1966, which would address many of these gaps, strengthen the FOID system and help ensure that people with violence criminal histories who are prohibited from gun possession are not able to easily evade the law and arm themselves.

Under current law, an unlicensed seller must only verify that a person looking to buy a gun has a valid FOID card. There is no requirement that a background check be conducted at the time of the sale. The BIO Bill would change that, by requiring that unlicensed sales be facilitated by a licensed gun dealer and include a background check.

Five innocent lives in Aurora, Illinois were lost because a system that should have prevented a known felon from having access to guns failed.

Today and every day, we must remember and honor the victims of this devastating act of violence: Clayton Parks of Elgin, age 32; Trevor Wehner of DeKalb, age 21; Russell Beyer of Yorkville, age 47; Vicente Juarez of Oswego, age 54; and Josh Pinkard of Oswego, age 37. We also honor Timothy Williams, who was wounded by the gunman while running to warn other employees of the shooting.

I commend the Illinois House for passing this important legislation last year. Now it is up to my colleagues in the Illinois Senate to do the same.

By refusing to take action, we are continuing to allow violent criminals to obtain firearms and we are putting our friends, family, neighbors, students and children at risk.

I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand against gun violence and pass this critical legislation that will put a stop to these preventable tragedies.

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