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HON. CONGRESSWOMAN DIANA DeGETTE
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Honoring the Victims of Club Q Nightclub Shooting

Madam Speaker: I rise today, along with my colleagues: Congressman Ed Perlmutter, Congressman Jason Crow, Congressman Joe Neguse, and Congressman David Cicilline, to honor the victims of the tragic shooting that took place at the Club Q Nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado on November 19, 2022.

It has been nearly one month since the horrific events that unfolded when a shooter – armed with a semiautomatic assault weapon and high-capacity magazine – entered the popular LGBTQ+ nightclub and opened fire, killing five people and injuring at least 22 more.

It was the latest in a growing number of violent attacks targeting the LGBTQ+ community throughout the country, and it led the Department of Homeland Security to issue a new warning about the growing threat facing the LGBTQ+ community here in the U.S.

Let us be clear: no one in this country should have to live in constant fear of being attacked for who they are or who they love.

No one should have to experience the unimaginable pain and suffering that so many in our community are now feeling in the wake of this senseless attack at Club Q.

Among those killed in the attack was Ashley Paugh, a 35-year-old wife and mother of an 11-year-old daughter. Ashley was not a member of the LGBTQ+ community but had driven to Colorado Springs to spend time with friends at the popular club and see a comedian who was performing there.

Raymond Vance was 22 years old and was visiting the club for the first time that evening with his longtime girlfriend and her family. Raymond, who had just gotten his first job and was excited

to have received his first paycheck, was there to help his girlfriend and her family celebrate the birthday of a longtime friend.

Kelly Loving was a 40-year-old transgender woman from Denver who had driven to Colorado Springs for the weekend.

Daniel Aston and Derrick Rump were both bartenders working at the club when the shooting occurred.

Daniel, a 28-year-old transgender man, had moved to Colorado Springs two years earlier to be closer to his mom and dad and started working at the club, which was just a few minutes from his parents' home.

Derrick, who friends say was always full of smiles, found more than just a job at Club Q, he had found a community that he loved and a place where he felt he truly belonged.

Daniel and Derrick were beloved members of the Club Q family, and together they helped create a space that felt safe for so many who visited there.

As we take time to honor the memory of those we lost, we also must honor the bravery and heroism of those whose actions likely prevented even more bloodshed that day.

Retired U.S. Army veteran, Richard Fierro, who was at the club with his family that evening to celebrate the birthday of a friend, and Thomas James, who was performing at the club when the shooting began, have been widely credited for their heroic actions to subdue the shooter and save countless lives.

We owe them and all those who responded to the scene that evening, including local law enforcement, first responders, and civilians, a tremendous debt of gratitude.

We wish all those who were injured in this attack a speedy recovery. And we send our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those who were lost in this horrific attack.

The hate-filled rhetoric that's fueling this rise in violent attacks against the LGBTQ+ community has no place in our society, and neither should the weapons of war being used to carry these awful attacks out.

At some point, we, as a society, have to come together and say, 'enough is enough.'

At some point, we have to realize that the toxic combination of hate and access to guns is resulting in deadly attacks across this country – and the time to end the hate-filled rhetoric that's demonizing the LGBTQ+ community is now.

Every single member of the LGBTQ+ community deserves to live their life openly without fear of hate and violence. And every person in this country deserves to live a life free of the constant threat of gun violence that we face.

That's why, today, my colleagues and I are introducing a resolution condemning this attack and the growing wave of violence. I'm thankful to the House Equality Caucus, the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force, and a number of organizations that helped us draft this resolution and who are joining us in pushing for its passage.

But, condemning these attacks is not enough. The time to act is now.

We need to get these assault weapons off our streets and ban the sale of these high-capacity magazines today.

Taking these steps will not bring back all those we have lost to gun violence, but it will save others from meeting the same violent fate. This is our resolve as we continue to fight for commonsense gun safety measures.

We send our heartfelt condolences to the loved ones of those we lost at Club Q. They will not be forgotten.