

Alcazar Opening Statement:

Good afternoon, Chairman Biggs, Ranking Member Jackson-Lee, and distinguished members of this Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of the more than 800,000 U.S. Concealed Carry Association members and the millions of law-abiding gun owners nationwide.

My name is Beth Alcazar, and I am honored to represent female firearms owners, mothers, and educators who prioritize the safety of our families, our loved ones, and ourselves.

I am a writer. I am an instructor. I am a doctoral candidate working toward my terminal degree in curriculum and instruction. But first and foremost I am a mother. And I have made a personal choice to live as *a mom with a gun*. After all, I have three children who look to me as their guide, coach, counselor, and protector. And my journey in — and my dedication to — firearms, self-defense, and training has all been motivated by them.

Ultimately, my children are the three most important reasons why I choose to carry a tool for protection.

I am also a proud member of the USCCA, one of the largest and fastest-growing organizations dedicated to educating and training responsible gun owners. Since the USCCA was founded, it has been providing essential self-defense training and resources to law-abiding citizens so that they have the tools to protect themselves and their loved ones.

Today, our focus has expanded to advocating on behalf of the rising numbers of responsible gun owners from all walks of life.

And I couldn't be more passionate about this mission.

My qualifications and certifications for teaching firearms, self-defense, and personal protection come from ALICE Institute, The American Red Cross, D.R.A.W. School, Force Science Institute, HSI, I.C.E. Training, NRA, SIG Sauer Academy, and the USCCA, with whom I also have the privilege of being editor-at-large for *Concealed Carry Magazine*.

I am also the author of *Women's Handgun & Self-Defense Fundamentals*, which was written, edited, and designed by women to help other women navigate their own training journeys.

Most recently, I developed and authored *Children's Firearms & Safety Fundamentals*, a curriculum designed to equip parents, educators, and children with the knowledge needed to be safe around guns.

As with all things in life, education is paramount. And this isn't just about teaching children firearms safety; it's about impressing upon them how important it is to use good situational awareness and to avoid questionable or uncomfortable situations. It's about how to be prepared, how to consider and choose the best options, and how to *live fiercely and safely* each and every day.

As a woman and a mother, I am honored to be one of the leading instructors in the firearms industry. With this, I have witnessed, firsthand, a rich diversity as scores of American women are purchasing, training with, and carrying firearms in the name of female empowerment.

For many women, this self-defense awakening has resulted in a new source of certainty, security, responsibility, and equality that we might not have otherwise had.

For the women who walk across a dark parking lot every night after work. For the realtors who show houses to strangers every week. For any young women who have shadows in their past. And for moms, like me, with children in tow. I think they would all

agree: They refuse to stand by, idle and helpless. They refuse to become someone's victim. They refuse to allow harm to come to the ones they love.

That's why I view the attempt to limit or even criminalize law-abiding gun owners as anti-productive and dangerous, potentially carrying grave consequences for the safety of our families and our communities. The reality is that violent criminals — many with evil intent — do exist and are terrorizing us.

This shouldn't be the way that we live. But it serves as a clear reminder that law-abiding citizens should be able to defend themselves from danger at all times. And any solution to better protect ourselves, our children, and our communities should start with our God-given right to self-defense.

I can honestly say that I am a profoundly different person from the woman — and mother — I was before I made the decision to carry a firearm. I am physically changed because of how I train, how I move through my life, and how I carry. But I am also emotionally changed because of the decisions I have made, the situations I have contemplated, and the obstacles I have overcome.

And the more I've trained, the more I've realized that I don't have to wait for someone else to care for me or protect me. I am my own protector. And I am my family's first responder.

And being able to keep myself and those I love safe? I don't think there's anything more important than that....

Today, I hope to be part of an open, respectful, and productive dialogue about how we can empower and protect law-abiding gun owners — especially the rising demographic of women.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important topic. I welcome your questions.