

Hi. My name is Cathy Read. I'm Mary Read's step mom. Mary died in French class on April 16 at Virginia Tech.

As a mom and even more so as a step mom there are many things that I worry about and very few things that I can do anything about when it comes to the kids.

Mary was a good kid. Contrary to what some people think, she was in the right place at the right time. Where else would a parent want their kid to be but in class on a Monday morning? Nothing that Mary's dad and I can do and nothing that the panel can do will change what happened on April 16th or bring Mary back.

But there are few things that Pete and I can do and there are a lot of things that the Virginia Tech Review Panel can do to improve the outlook for Mary's friends and brothers and sisters.

I don't worry about Mary anymore. She is with God in heaven and she is safe now. I worry about Mary's roommate who is taking summer school classes. I worry about Mary's friends who are going back to school in August. I worry about the students, faculty and first responders who were physically, mentally and emotionally injured in Norris Hall and West AJ. I worry about our family and the families of all those who were injured and slain that day. I worry about a university that seems to have its heart in the right place but is so far out of its element that it doesn't know how to manage the fallout from April 16th. I worry about a Commonwealth that treats mental illness through the judicial system and gives a court official more authority than a doctor over a person's health. I worry about a wealthy nation that can't find the resources to pay for health care for its citizens. I worry about a society that holds individual rights in such high regard that they jeopardize public safety. I worry that the Review Panel will take a narrow view

of the events related to April 16th and miss the broader opportunity to make something good come out of the evil of that day.

So I ask you take the road less traveled and decide to address the hard issues. If you feel this is beyond the scope of the Virginia Tech Review Panel then clearly identify what still needs to be done in your report and recommend that a federal commission be appointed to continue your work and address the broader issues for the nation. I ask you to make actionable recommendations in your report related to privacy, mental health care, gun availability and the safety of students at universities. Divide your recommendations into ones that cost money and ones that don't. Identify who is responsible for taking the action and consider reconvening the commission at periodic intervals to review progress and ensure action is taken.

Our daughter died in French class in Norris Hall on April 16, 2007. I believe with my whole heart that something positive has to come from her death. We can not let the evil that descended on Virginia Tech that day triumph. We want to help institute positive and lasting changes so that students will get the help they need and be able to live in a safe environment at college. A strong and hard hitting report from this panel is the first step toward positive and lasting change. We owe it to Mary's friends who have to go back to college. We owe it Mary's younger brothers and sisters who will go to college in the future. We owe it to Mary and all the students and faculty who died or were injured on April 16th. We have to do better.