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*Joint Standing Committee:  
Appropriations & Financial Affairs, Ranking Member*

**Senator Cathy Breen**  
**Testimony in Opposition to LD1761**  
**January 24, 2018**

Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am here today to testify today in **opposition to LD1761**. Every day, there are plenty of challenges arriving at our schools' doorsteps, like navigating new technologies, home schooling, student hunger, proficiency based education, rising numbers of children requiring special education resources, charter schools, the far-reaching effects of adverse childhood experiences, and more. The scope of this committee's work is both wide and deep. And, yet, each of these issues has at its heart two essential questions. First, how do we best educate each and every Maine child, our state's most precious resource? And, second, which policies will achieve that goal? There is a wide range of perspectives on these questions, as there should be.

Now comes yet another social challenge knocking at the door of our public schools - the political agenda of the National Rifle Association (NRA) and its allies. LD1761 is not about how we best educate each and every Maine child. And it's not about which policies will help to achieve that goal. And certainly, it's not about the underlying premise of either of these questions - that we keep our children safe in our schools. According to the NRA website, it has pushed this bill in other states like Nevada, West Virginia and Texas in recent years.

In my opinion, guns - like tobacco products, alcohol, and pornography - have no place on public school property, including in the parking lot. Under Maine law, tobacco products, alcohol, and pornography are lawfully available to adults. But we have also deemed them unsafe or inappropriate for our children, so we prohibit them on school property.

At its worst, LD1761 is about pushing the NRA's political agenda of normalizing the presence of life threatening firearms in all sectors of American society. At its best, sadly, it's about parents who think *their* priorities - in this case, shirking their responsibility to clean out their cars before they pick up their children at school - are more important than our children's safety.

Some years ago, one of the schools in my district built a new, state-of-the-art, award winning elementary school. Shortly after it opened, I bumped into a father whose two children were students at this same school. He had a lot to say about the new school. But it wasn't quite what I expected. Rather than excitement about this remarkable new community asset, he had a really big problem. Oh, my, I thought. What's going on here? You see, the new rules for after school pick up in the parking lot made his children late for their private tennis lessons.

This was a big deal to him. He really wanted all of the adults in the building to pay attention to the very pressing issue of his wanting his kids to arrive at their private tennis lessons on time. He felt truly inconvenienced. As much as I wanted to empathize, I had to look him in the eye and say, in no uncertain terms, that the job of every adult on school property, including him, is to keep every child in the parking lot safe. It is not to cater to your need to have good tennis players in your family, and not to organize the safety rules around your personal agenda or your poor scheduling decisions. By all means you have every right under the *U.S. Constitution* to bring your child to private tennis lessons. But, no, your agenda in the parking lot is not more important than our children's safety. I'm so sorry for your inconvenience.

That is exactly the same message I have for parents who want to pick up their children with guns in their cars. While I realize that tennis lessons and firearms are hardly analogous, I hope you see my point. As I said to the tennis dad, the job of every adult on school property, including these parents, is to keep every child safe, not to cater to parents' need to have a firearm in their car, not to organize the safety rules around a political agenda or their poor scheduling decisions.

In closing, I hope this committee will keep its focus on the educational policies that are best for Maine children, and keep its long standing commitment to the safety of Maine children at their schools, and vote "ought not to pass" on LD1761. Thank you for your time.

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