



Gun Owners of Maine, Inc.

“Every citizen has a right to keep and bear arms
and this right shall never be questioned.”

www.gunownersofmaine.org

Post Office Box 65 ★ China, ME ★ 04358

TESTIMONY OF TODD TOLHURST, GUN OWNERS OF MAINE, IN FAVOR OF LD 1572

Good afternoon, Senator Rosen, Representative Fowle, and members of the Committee.

My name is Todd Tolhurst, and I am the President of Gun Owners of Maine, a nonprofit volunteer gun rights organization, representing the interests of our thousands of members and gun owners across the state. Today, I am here to offer testimony in favor of LD 1572.

The right to keep and bear arms for self-protection is never more critical than in one's own home. Criminals brazen enough to enter an occupied residence to commit crimes are the most dangerous sort. And those who depend upon publicly-financed housing are among the most vulnerable of our citizens. Such housing is commonly located in high-crime areas, predisposing public housing residents to be victims of crime. Many such residents are elderly, and unable to defend themselves from far younger and stronger attackers, and are often targeted by violent criminals who seek to steal prescription medications.

Today, many public housing units prohibit residents from possessing firearms, effectively stripping them of the means of effective self-defense, and leaving them at the mercy of violent criminals. It would be outrageous if public housing landlords were to require residents to sign away their freedom of worship or their freedom of speech in order to live in a unit paid for with public monies. It would be unacceptable for landlords accepting public funds to require their tenants to give up their right to vote. It is equally egregious to restrict a tenant's right to exercise their right to keep and bear arms in their own home, when that home is supported by public funds.

We recognize and support a property owner's right to determine how his property is used, including prohibiting firearms on the property, if that is the landlord's wish. However, such a policy is incompatible with accepting public monies for the use of the property. The State of Maine cannot itself prohibit firearms from State-owned housing, and it is not proper for the State to pay private property owners who do so.

Although landlords have not often expressed concern about liability for crimes committed against their own tenants on their property, they do often raise the objection of liability for harm arising from a tenant's firearm. This bill puts those concerns to rest by immunizing landlords from liability arising out of lawfully possessed firearms, rendering that objection moot.

The State of Maine owes its citizens the ability to protect themselves in their own homes. I urge the members of the Committee cast a vote in favor of the rights and the safety its most vulnerable citizens, and report LD 1572 out as Ought to Pass.