



Testimony before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee in support of
L.D. 22 “An Act to Impede the Transfer of Firearms to Prohibited Persons”
April 3, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Tara Williams and I am a resident of Cumberland and a mom of two children, one in elementary school and one in middle school. I am also a volunteer with the Maine chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. Moms Demand Action is the largest grassroots organization dedicated to protecting our communities, families, and children from gun violence in all its various forms including mass shootings, homicide, unintentional deaths, and suicide by firearms.

In an average year in Maine, 163 people die by guns.* I support L.D. 22, because this bill would make it a crime for anyone to knowingly or intentionally sell or transfer a firearm to a person whom they know or has reason to believe is prohibited by state law from having a firearm. This proposed legislation would help keep guns out of the hands of people with dangerous histories. It would help prevent gun violence in Maine. (In addition to holding those who knowingly give guns to prohibited people accountable, our state should also require background checks on all gun sales, as addressed in L.D. 168.) Common-sense gun laws, like the one proposed in this bill, help make our state and our communities safer places to live.

I have spent many years working professionally on behalf of young children and families, teaching in child care programs and elementary schools, and working for nonprofits that focus on systems and policy changes to improve children’s lives and their education in Maine and across the country. This week I am grieving with Nashville and everyone impacted by yet another senseless act of gun violence in our schools. School shootings like this are not acts of nature – no other peer nation allows children to be shot and killed in schools like this. **But in America guns are the leading killer of our children.** We need to put the safety of our children first. We need to have gun safety laws like the one proposed in L.D. 22.

We need to also address the epidemic of daily gun violence which plagues far too many communities across the country and that kids experience in their neighborhood and walk through on their way to and from school. The horrifying truth is that far more children experience gun violence at home or in their communities than at school. Every single instance of gunfire that children are exposed to impacts their ability to learn, grow, and develop. Our gun violence crisis is a preventable tragedy. I have had enough. I hope you have too.

*Data Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. WONDER Online Database, Underlying Cause of Death. A yearly average was developed using four years of the most recent available data: 2018 to 2021.