

Senator Joseph Baldacci, Representative Ann Matlack and Honorable Members of the Committee on State and Local Government, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Patty Kidder and I live in the village of Springvale located in Maine's newest city, Sanford. I am here as a person of faith, to speak to you in favor of LD 805 – An Act To Allow Municipalities To Prohibit Firearms at Voting Places.

Instead of a statewide prohibition mandate which would be ill received, this bill empowers local governments to make their own decision to prohibit guns at polling places and prohibit armed intimidation in their communities on voting day. Law enforcement officers would be exempt and gun owners who carry firearms in public could bring their guns with them on election day but they would have to leave them unloaded and stored in their locked vehicle.

In the past, I thought a law like this was unnecessary, but the open carry law has made me nervous seeing people I don't know carrying their guns openly in public. Now, I have a better understanding of the intimidation People of Color must feel often after seeing armed people on the rooftops of buildings in downtown Sanford last summer. This armed citizen militia was standing at the ready to attack, all because People of Color and their Allies were holding a peaceful Black Lives Matter event and we were chanting while marching down Main Street with a police escort front and back.

After witnessing the openly armed extremists in my own community last summer and seeing the video of the attempted Coup attack on the Capital Building in Washington, DC on January 6th, I now know there are municipalities in Maine that need to have this option.

Openly armed extremists in and around voting places are a real and imminent threat to free and fair elections in Maine and to a functioning democracy. As a member of MUUSAN, Maine Unitarian Universalist State Advocacy Network, we are asking lawmakers to empower localities to prohibit guns in and around polling places and keep armed intimidation out of politics by supporting LD 805.

Thank you for your time.

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