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30 Association Drive, Box 190

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www.maineap.org

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Deborah Hagler and I reside in Harpswell. I have been a practicing pediatrician in Maine for almost 26 years and am the immediate past President of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am speaking today in support of LD 60.

In 2020, firearm deaths eclipsed motor vehicle related injuries as the leading cause of death in children and adolescents. This number includes homicides, suicides, and unintentional injuries. Almost half of suicides are from firearms.

Suicide in adolescent patients is heart wrenching and deeply affects their families and the entire community. They are generally associated with depression and known to be highly impulsive. Studies of interviewed survivors of a suicide attempt revealed 40 percent contemplated suicide for less than 20 minutes and shockingly, about a quarter for less than 5 minutes. This is why keeping lethal means away from youth is especially important. If access to lethal means is denied or delayed, there is a chance the deep pain can pass, and tragedy can be averted.

Most who attempt suicide will not die from suicide. 9 out of 10 who attempt to take their life will go forward and lead productive lives unless, of course, the initial suicide attempt is with a firearm. Those suicide attempts are lethal 85-90% of the time.

Not all firearm suicides are associated with mental illness. Many are associated with a great life stress and carried out in a moment of crisis. This is why an intentional pause is helpful and could be lifesaving.

States with waiting period laws that delay the receipt of a firearm after the purchase have 51% fewer firearm suicides versus states without. They also have about a third less total suicides than states that do not have waiting periods. Waiting clearly saves lives..... nothing is worth the rush and potential for impulsive action. Please support this legislation and help save lives.

References

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