

Hillary Shende
Brunswick
LD 60

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Hillary Shende, and I am here to support the passage of LD 60.

Like most Mainers, both gun-owners and non gun-owners, I support a 72 hour waiting period between the purchase and possession of a firearm. Like universal background checks, this is an additional step we can take as Mainers to stem the tide of gun violence, both in our state and in others. There is no one measure that will end all gun violence, but each common sense step we take can save many lives, and that is more than worth the effort to pass this bill.

Like universal background check laws, waiting period laws work. They reduce both homicide and suicide in a statistically significant way. Research by the Rand Corporation and others shows this. As you are probably aware, Maine has a high suicide rate, particularly among our veterans and our young people. In fact, among people age 10-25, Maine has the highest suicide rate in the nation! We must do something about this! While many people who attempt suicide will later go on to live happy productive lives, the ones who choose firearms as their means almost never do. So if we can just keep firearms out of people's hands for a few days, the impulse to "just end it all right now" often passes, and folks can have a chance to get the help they need and deserve.

As a mother of two Maine kids in that 10-25 age range, my kids have a higher likelihood of ending their own lives than kids in other states do, and while I hope my husband and I are instilling a love for life in our children, it would be foolish to assume my children are immune from the threat of suicide. Rates of teen depression and anxiety are high these days, and the first year of the pandemic kept my kids — and everyone else's kids — isolated from school, friends, and extended family during a crucial portion of their development. By passing this bill, you can help reduce my mom anxiety, not only because a waiting period law will become part of the patchwork of measures bringing down the likelihood of suicide among my children's generation, but also because it will bring down the homicide rate, too, making it less likely that our kids will get killed at school.

Can also just say how ridiculous it is that parents like me have to utter phrases like, "please make it less likely that my kids will get killed at school"? It's utter insanity. We don't have to live like this. No other civilized country on earth puts up with this level of gun violence. We shouldn't have to either. And sensible gun laws like waiting periods and universal background checks will have almost zero impact on any responsible citizen's ability to hunt, go to target practice, or protect themselves in their home. These bills are no-brainers. Please pass them as soon as possible. Thank you.