

Betsy Williams
Brunswick
LD 1557

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Betsy Williams and I live in Brunswick.

The 18th century musket and powder horns that hang over the doorway of our island cottage remind me that our country was founded on the principles of self-determination and self-defense.

The second amendment of the US Constitution reminds me that the founding fathers recognized the critical importance of local regulation of weapons used to stand up a militia to protect these principles.

And the news this past week reminds me how incredibly far we have come, as a citizenry, in using guns for either of these purposes. Four innocent adults killed in their home in Bowdoin, three others randomly shot while driving down 295; a young girl killed in her car in NY because she was lost and used a stranger's driveway to turn around, a young man in Kansas City shot twice when he knocked on the wrong door to pick up his siblings.

These incidents, like hundreds—no, thousands—of others like them neither protect nor defend our constitutional rights to self-determination and self-defense. In fact, I would argue, they strip us of those rights—placing our very right to life—at risk.

All three of the so-called “guns in schools” bills before you today are asking for more of the same. The most potentially dangerous is LD1557, which would allow anyone with a permit to carry a concealed firearm into a school building. Just because a person carrying a gun intends to use it for self-defense or the defense of others, does not mean that's the way it will be used. The potential for human error—misjudgment, impulsivity, carelessness—not to mention the potential for mental illness, are all real dangers—dangers that you can easily avoid by not allowing the situation in the first place.

The madness we saw play out these past weeks here in Maine and elsewhere is born of hands-off public policy that imperils all our lives. Our legislators—you, your colleagues in the Maine State Legislature and your federal counterparts—are the only ones who can turn this tide. Please do your part and vote “Ought not to pass” on LD 1557.

Thank you.