

Meret Bainbridge, 26 Cleveland Street, Saco, ME 04072

Testimony in support of LD 2237 An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources

Committee on Health and Human Services, PH 3/4/2024

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Meret Bainbridge, I am a resident of Saco, a healthcare provider, and a Unitarian Universalist. I am submitting testimony in favor of LD 2237.

Our mental health care system is in a severe crisis, lacking much needed treatment options for people in mental health crisis situations at risk of harming themselves or others, including suicide, homicide, and other acts of violence, including gun violence. The Lewiston shooting in October 2023 was a wake-up call for Maine to act.

I am a licensed acupuncturist with a background in counseling psychology. Since the pandemic I have seen growing anxiety and depression in almost all my patients, many of whom are unable to find needed counseling services due to long wait lists and lack of providers.

During the pandemic when my private practice was slow because of the public health emergency, I supplemented my income with part-time work in a hospital setting as a patient companion, sitting one-on-one with patients who required constant supervision. This included sitting in acute psychiatric settings on closed units on suicide watch. It broke my heart to witness so many people, including teens and even children who spent sometimes several days in a cold locked unit wearing paper gowns in an emergency hospital setting because there was no available placement in an inpatient treatment setting. We need to urgently correct this situation and make mental health crisis response services available.

Mental health services must go hand-in-hand with gun safety measures which are addressed in other bills coming before this committee. I support both common sense gun safety laws and mental health violence prevention measures. Both are necessary to prevent a mass shooting like the one in Lewiston to happen again.

Please vote OTP on LD 2237.

Thank you.