



March 4, 2024

Senator Baldacci  
Representative Meyer  
Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
100 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

**RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 2237 - "An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-Being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources"**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Jeff Matranga and I have practiced in the Waterville area for over 30 years. I am a psychologist testifying today on behalf of the Maine Psychological Association (MePA) in strong support of LD 2237. MePA is a membership organization representing psychologists in Maine who work in private practice, at Maine's colleges and universities, and in the public sector. Our mission is to advance psychology as a science, as a profession, and as a means of promoting health and human welfare.

The initiatives proposed in LD 2237, including the expansion of mental health crisis intervention services, establishment of crisis receiving centers, and the creation of the Office of Violence Prevention, align closely with our association's mission. These measures not only address immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for a healthier, safer Maine.

Federal, state, and local mental health advocates and policymakers are increasingly investing in the crisis continuum of care including call centers, mobile crisis teams, and longer-term crisis stabilization facilities, all of which are outlined in LD 2237.<sup>1</sup> MePA also fully supports wider dissemination of evidence-based suicide prevention materials, particularly at gun shops because the presence of a firearm in a home is associated with a significant increase in the rate of suicide attempts<sup>2</sup>.

Although MePA fully supports LD 2237, as the largest association of psychologists in the State of Maine, we must reiterate that fewer than 7 percent of violent crimes in the United States are committed by people with mental health conditions.<sup>3</sup> Because 93 percent of these crimes involve individuals with no underlying mental health condition, MePA feels it is important to recognize the need for a robust mental health support system not only as a tactic for reducing gun violence, but as a crucial aspect of public health and to ensure individual wellbeing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Matranga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeff" and last name "Matranga" clearly legible.

Jeff Matranga  
MePa Board President

<sup>1</sup> Hogan, M. F., & Goldman, M. L. (2021). New Opportunities to Improve Mental Health Crisis Systems. *Psychiatric Services (Washington, D.C.)*, 72(2), 169-.

<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.202000114>

<sup>2</sup> Ghiani, M., Hawkins, S. S., & Baum, C. F. (2019). Associations Between Gun Laws and Suicides. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 188(7). <https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwz069>

<sup>3</sup> Appelbaum, P. S. (2013). Public safety, mental disorders, and guns. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 70, 565–566.