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Testimony of Rep. Mo Terry in support of
**LD 2237, An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding
Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and members of the Health and Human Services Committee, I am Maureen Terry, representing part of Gorham in House District 108. I stand in strong support of **LD 2237, "An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources."**

The devastating mass shooting that occurred in Lewiston on October 25 left our state grappling with pain, trauma and a desperate need for healing. In so many ways, communities across Maine have come together to offer what support we can to our friends and neighbors directly affected by the tragedy. Now is the time for us here in the Legislature to use the tools in our toolbox to lend our support as well.

At its core, the proposed legislation before you is about public health. Gun violence in all its forms has become a significant public health crisis. It poses a serious threat to the well-being and safety of individuals and communities, and its impact, often felt for generations, extends beyond just physical injuries. Gun violence can result in loss of life and permanent disability, as well as long-lasting psychological and emotional trauma for survivors, families, witnesses and the health care providers who care for the victims.

This legislation is based on a public health approach to prevent gun violence, which is a population level approach that addresses both firearm access and the factors that contribute to and protect from gun violence. It contains several initiatives that will reduce gun violence, strengthen our mental health system and save lives.

The bill makes a \$2.5 million investment in mental health crisis intervention mobile response services. These services will ensure that individuals in crisis have immediate access to mental health professionals who can provide timely and appropriate intervention.

The bill also allocates \$9 million to establish six new mental health crisis receiving centers across various counties in the state. These centers will serve as safe havens for individuals

experiencing mental health crises, providing them with the necessary care and resources to stabilize and begin their path to recovery. By expanding access to medication management services, including telehealth services, and investing in employee recruitment and retention, the bill ensures that individuals receive comprehensive and sustainable mental health support.

In addition to addressing the immediate needs of individuals in crisis, this bill takes a proactive approach to violence prevention. It establishes an Office of Violence Prevention within the Maine CDC, dedicated to coordinating and promoting effective efforts to reduce violence in our state. This office will specifically focus on gun violence and related trauma, as well as research into causes and evidence-based responses. By investing in research and prevention strategies, we can work towards a safer and healthier Maine for all.

The bill further recognizes the importance of suicide prevention education. It proposes the creation of a "Gun Department of Health and Human Services" to develop and distribute written suicide prevention education materials, as well as online training resources. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and resources to identify and address mental health crises, we can save lives and prevent further harm.

Lastly, the bill mandates the development and implementation of a process to notify federally licensed firearm dealers about individuals deemed to be dangerous or in a mental health crisis. This is a critical step in ensuring that firearms do not fall into the wrong hands and that individuals who may pose a risk to themselves or others receive the support and intervention they need.

This comprehensive and collaborative piece of legislation that would strengthen public safety and well-being through the expansion of services and coordination of violence prevention resources is a vital step towards building a safer and healthier Maine. By investing in mental health crisis intervention, establishing crisis receiving centers, expanding access to medication management services, and implementing violence prevention measures, we can provide the necessary support for individuals impacted by the Lewiston mass shooting and prevent potential harm in the future. I urge you to support this bill and prioritize the well-being and safety of our communities.