



Committee on Judiciary

LD 2086 - *An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms - OTP*

LD 2119 - *An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights - OTP*

LD 2238 - *An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases - OTP*

Committee on Health and Human Services

LD 2237 - *An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources - OTP*

March 4, 2024

Respected Members of the Judiciary and Health and Human Services Committees, my name is Gia Drew. I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been representing and advocating for Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984, and I am testifying today on behalf of EqualityMaine in support of **LD 2086, LD 2119, LD 2237, and LD 2238**. We strongly believe that there is no single solution to stopping gun violence in Maine, which has the highest gun death rate in New England, and that a comprehensive approach is long overdue.

LD 2086 - An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms

We thank Senator Carney for the amendment that will update Maine law to include conversion devices such as bump stocks in the definition of "machine gun." It makes logical sense to bring state law into accordance with federal law, under which conversion devices are considered machine guns. More importantly, the current, unchecked ability of semiautomatic rifles to fire hundreds of bullets per minute with the use of conversion devices is antithetical to the preservation of life. Conversion devices, assault weapons, and high capacity magazines do not belong in Maine communities.

LD 2119 - An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights

Suicides have long accounted for the majority of U.S. gun deaths - in 2021, 54% of all gun-related deaths in the U.S. were suicides and 55% of all suicides involved a gun.¹ Additionally, the rate of firearm suicide in the most rural counties in Maine is 2 to 3 times higher than in the most urban counties, a rate that is reflected nationally as well.² Giving people a pathway to confidentially (and revocably) waive their right to purchase or receive a firearm is a suicide prevention tool that will help individuals make choices to keep themselves safe.

LD 2238 - An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases

By delaying the immediate ability to purchase firearms, waiting periods create an important “cooling off” period that can help prevent impulsive acts of gun violence, including gun homicides and suicides, according to the National Academy of Sciences.³ According to a 2019 study, 85% of non-gun owners and 72% of gun owners in the US support mandatory waiting periods for firearm purchases,⁴ further corroborating the fact that this bill, for which we thank Sen. Rotundo, is both desired and needed.

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

We resolutely support the establishment of an entity tasked with addressing violence, in all of its forms, through a public health lens in our state. Additionally, Maine is in great need of the provisions in this bill that will improve mental health crisis response

¹ Gramlich, John. “What the Data Says about Gun Deaths in the U.S.” Pew Research Center, 26 Apr. 2023, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. National Vital Statistics System, Mortality 1999-2020 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released in 2021. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2020. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>.

³ C., Luca M;Malhotra D;Poliquin. “Handgun Waiting Periods Reduce Gun Deaths.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29078268/

⁴ Dixon, Graham, et al. “Public Opinion Perceptions, Private Support, and Public Actions of US Adults Regarding Gun Safety Policy.” *JAMA Network Open*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 1 Dec. 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7756237/.

services. As of 2021, Maine had fewer than 100 crisis response workers for the entire state and waitlists for mental health services numbering in the thousands.⁵ When people cannot access the services they need and are left on a waitlist, there is a risk that they may harm themselves or someone else. However, it is vital to note that serious mental illness is not by itself a predictor of violence. Only 3-5% of violence is committed by people with mental health disabilities and less than 5% of gun-related deaths in the U.S. are committed by people with mental health disabilities. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of a violent crime than the general population.⁶

LGBTQ+ people are more than two times as likely to be victims of gun violence than their straight and cisgender peers.⁷ Since 2013, nearly two-thirds of fatal violence toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people involved a gun; the majority of those victims were black women under the age of 30.⁸ The LGBTQ+ community is also disproportionately impacted by suicide, in no small part due to the stigma, discrimination, and bias that are on the rise around the country. The combination of a lack of adequate laws to prevent gun violence and animosity towards the LGBTQ+ community had led to the loss of lives as well as immense harm and trauma caused by violence.

We urge you to support these four bills, and to vote Ought To Pass.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)
EqualityMaine

⁵ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/8020>

⁶ www.bazelon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2-3-2020-DebunkingTheMyths_Follow_up_Materials.pdf.

⁷ Kyliewatz. "Facts and Statistics About the Impact of Gun Violence on LGBTQ+ People." *Sandy Hook Promise*, 19 Feb. 2024, www.sandyhookpromise.org/blog/news/facts-and-statistics-about-the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-lgbtq-people/.

⁸ "Gun Violence Prevention." *Human Rights Campaign*, www.hrc.org/resources/gun-violence-prevention.