



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Support of:
LD 2086: An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms
LD 2119: An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights**

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
State House, Room 438
Tuesday, March 5, 2024

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA is in support of LD 2086: “An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms” and LD 2119: “An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 700 individual members and 60 organizations across the state. MPHA works to optimize the health of people and places in Maine through advocacy, education, partnerships, and public health workforce development. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Introduction

Gun violence is a significant public health problem and leading cause of premature death in Maine and across the country. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2022, there were more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths in the U.S., equivalent to 132 people dying from a firearm-related injury every day.¹ According to the [Gun Violence Archive](#), in 2023, there were 656 mass shootings in the U.S., a 3-fold increase since 2014 (272). Already in 2024 (as of today, March 5, 2024), there have been 70 mass shootings in the U.S. Nearly 3,000 adults and 250 children (youth ages 0-17 years) have already died in the past 2 months due to gun violence.

LD 2086

This amended bill would update Maine law to include conversion devices (Bump stocks, Glock switches, and Auto sears) in the definition of “machine gun,” bringing state law into line with federal law, under which conversion devices are considered machine guns. What this legislation doesn’t do, and what we encourage the committee to do, is take a step further and end the sale of assault weapons and [prohibit high-capacity magazines](#).

[Assault weapons](#) are designed to inflict mass casualties in a short amount of time. They are weapons of war. Assault weapons have been used in the seven deadliest mass shootings in the last decade, and [an analysis](#) of mass shooting deaths showed that assault rifles accounted for nearly 86% of the total 501 fatalities reviewed.

Easy access to assault style weapons and large-capacity magazines has fueled an alarming increase in high casualty mass shootings across the nation, including in last October's mass shooting in Lewiston, Maine, which killed 19 Mainers and injured 13 more.

[Research shows](#) that mass shooting-related deaths declined during the 10 years that sales of assault weapons were prohibited nationally (1994-2004). [Data also show](#) that states that end the sale of assault weapons see a reduction in mass shooting-related fatalities. Please end the sale of assault weapons and prohibit high-capacity magazines.

LD 2119

This bill allows a person to waive their right to purchase or receive a firearm by filing a voluntary waiver of firearm rights form. The bill also allows a person to revoke a voluntary waiver of firearm rights. This legislation is a suicide-prevention policy because it allows individuals who experience suicidal ideation to protect themselves by preventing impulsive firearm purchases. In Maine, in 2021, there were 178 deaths by firearms; 10% were homicides and 89% were suicides (in 2021, 277 Mainers died by suicide; 56% used a firearm).² In other words, most people in Maine who commit suicide die by firearm. We should offer people a confidential way to protect themselves.

We respectfully request you to please vote LD 2086 and LD 2119 "Ought to Pass." Thank you for your consideration.

¹ US CDC. 2023. [Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention](#).

² Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. 2023. Firearm fatality and hospitalization report – 2021.