

Rachael Haskell  
Portland  
LD 2224

I was seventeen years old when the shooting happened in Parkland, Florida. A high school senior, I was devastated by the carnage and the loss of young lives. Preparing to head off to college soon, I thought about all of the young people who had lost such an opportunity due to this horrific act of violence, and while I grieved for the loss of my peers, I also lived in fear that myself and my classmates might be next. School became an exercise in searching for exits and hiding spots, a place where my safety was a primary consideration. Now, I am afraid everywhere—grocery stores, restaurants, and highways. Nowhere feels safe any more. I know how damaging this fear has been as a young person, but I cannot imagine what it is like for those who are even younger than I am: those for whom this seems to be becoming normal. We cannot let gun violence become a normal consideration for children. They deserve schools and outings free of fear, and we owe it to them to give them that life. The proposed legislation to improve gun safety is highly important in achieving that goal. Maine is 25th in the country for the strength of its gun laws: we need to do better. I am asking the Maine legislature to take the safety of its citizens seriously and pass gun safety legislation. It is long overdue.