

Barbara Arsenault
Mexico
LD 2238

Thank you Chairs Senator Carney and Representative Matt Moone and Judiciary Committee members for the opportunity to express the support of LD 2238. My name is Barbara Arsenault and I am from Mexico, Maine.

I live in a gun owning home and I respect the second amendment and responsible gun ownership.

My focus today is to look at the 72 hour wait period and how it can relate to firearm suicide. As a long time advocate for veterans I am especially concerned with veteran suicide. The VA publishes statistics on veteran suicide for each state with a 2 year lag time and usually comes out each fall. In Maine thirty eight veterans died in 2020 and 38 in 2021 Firearms were the lethal means 60.5% of the time. As the state of Maine is number 5 with the highest percentage of veterans this is not just a veterans issue, it is a community issue. In a recent report a US Defense Department Committee recommended a 7 day waiting period to help protect military personnel and veterans. A committee member noted that the idea is to "slow down that access to firearms so that people can in essence survive periods of high risk"

A woman known to our family fatally shot herself in the parking lot of a gun shop in Virginia several years ago. She first attempted suicide in Chicago. She told a relative she would have bought a gun there but there was a waiting period. The relative continued to tell me that the family brought her home to Virginia, where there is no waiting period. She had been institutionalized. Had there been a simple waiting period or an Extreme Risk Protection Order she would not have been able to buy a gun that day. In Virginia they have neither. This young lady was 25 and had a Masters from Northwestern School of Journalism. She loved people and loved to tell their stories. To honor her memory I am telling her story and asking you to support LD 2238 72 hour wait to purchase a firearm.