

Written Testimony for the Judiciary Committee’s Public Hearing on LD 2224, An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine’s Firearm Laws and Mental Health System
March 7, 2024.

Senator Roundo, Representative Cloutier and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dianne Morse-Leonard from Waterford, ME. I am writing on behalf of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ’s Social Action Committee, to **testify in support of LD 2224.**

Following the horrific shootings in Lewiston on October 25, 2023, the UCC’s Social Action Committee held three gatherings to help those attending process their grief and start a conversation about ways to move forward to prevent further gun violence in our state. For several years the Maine UCC has had a resolution to support laws that: ban the sales and possession of high capacity rapid-fire weapons by individuals; ban the sale and possession of large ammunition magazines by individuals; and require universal background checks and safety courses for all sales of guns, including sales at gun shows and between private individuals. **LD 2224** would address the issue of background checks in private sales as well as “extreme risk protection” which is critical for saving lives when someone is in a moment of crisis, demonstrated by observable and varying signs of behavior.

Our daughter and her partner live in Lisbon Falls within a mile and a half (and about three quarters of a mile through the woods) from the boat landing where Robert Card’s car was found and even closer to the recycling center where his body was found. The days between the shooting and finding his body were two of the longest days of our lives. Her land has two outbuildings which Card could have used for refuge. Our daughter has horses in one of the buildings that is a distance from the house, so they could never completely shelter in place inside because the horses needed tending. The helicopters with searchlights were also unsettling to their animals. Until Card was found, it was two long days and nights of fear and apprehension for our family. Of course this was just a fraction of the suffering which is continuing for those who lost loved ones or were injured in the actual shootings that night, but it is another consequence of this unnecessary violence.

For this personal reason, and as a member of the UCC’s Social Action Committee who believes that we must do everything we can to make our state a more peaceful and safe place for all, **I urge you to support this bill, LD 2224.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Dianne Morse-Leonard, Waterford, ME

Dianne Morse-Leonard
Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ: Social Action Committee
LD 2224