

To the honorable members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Harold Van Lonkhuyzen, from Rockport.

I write in support of LD 2224. I am a psychiatrist working in community mental health and deal daily with the risks and sequelae of suicide and violence. A father, too, I do not want my elder daughter in Lewiston ever to have to endure another lockdown, nor my younger one to continue to worry about a shooting at our high school.

While I applaud the effort to strengthen our “yellow flag” law, I would also respectfully suggest that it could be further improved. First, I think “dangerousness” may be a simpler, less stigmatizing way to think of the assessment, rather than focusing on mental illness. The mentally ill are responsible only for a tiny minority of firearm-associated violence to others. Second, the requirement for a mental health evaluation seems not only misdirected but burdensome. Families are often most aware of concerning behavior and deserve a pathway for having a loved ones’ firearms secured. Moreover, law enforcement personnel are, in my experience, often reluctant to take people into protective custody.

I am grateful for your efforts to improve public health and safety, and reduce the burden imposed on us by inadequately regulated firearms.