

Testimony of Ruby Forde
Maine - Judiciary Committee Hearing
March 7, 2024

Testimony in Support of LD.2224, “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine’s Firearm Laws and Mental Health System” and LD.2238, “An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases”

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, honorable Committee members, and dedicated staff. My name is Ruby Forde and I am a senior at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. I am writing to provide testimony in support of LD.2224 and LD.2238. I appreciate your time in considering my written testimony, and enacting these two bills that I consider to be lifesaving.

While I am not originally from Lewiston or Maine, it is the place that over the past four years, I have come to call home. The sense of home and wellbeing that I associate with my life here in Lewiston was tragically and violently disrupted on October 25th, 2023. Unfortunately for myself and others in the Lewiston community, the trauma of that night has continued to shape our daily realities. Exactly one week after the Lewiston shooting, I came home to find my roommate alone and bleeding from self-inflicted razor wounds. Unable to refill her prescription due to the extenuating circumstances brought about by the lockdown, her mental health had spiraled.

This personal experience has only highlighted how issues of mental health and gun safety are painfully and inextricably linked. We all experienced the stress of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, and the people of Lewiston relived this stress during the October 25th lockdown. Again, these instances make it abundantly clear: mental health and gun safety are both public health issues, and they need to be addressed as such. This is why I am writing in favor of the legislation sponsored by Senator Peggy Rotundo and Representative Kristen Cloutier. In acknowledging the links between mental health and gun safety and establishing a violence prevention program at the Maine Center For Disease Control, LD.2224 begins the work of a multifaceted approach to violence prevention. Additionally, improvements to Maine’s “Yellow Flag Law” laid out in LD.2238 work strengthen the safety nets put in place to protect the health of all Mainers.

In concluding my testimony, I once again encourage members of the committee to vote in favor of passing both LD.2224 and LD.2238.

Thank you for your time in considering the wellbeing of the people of Lewiston, and Maine.

Ruby Forde
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