

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Dr. Emily Follo, and I am a Family Medicine physician in Portland, Maine.

I am writing to testify in support of [LD 2224](#) - An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System.

Firearms have become a relevant part of my work as a primary care physician because of their rank as the leading cause of death among children and teens nationwide, and their involvement in Maine's suicide rate. Our state's firearm-specific suicide rate is higher than that of the U.S. overall. This issue is too often oversimplified to "guns versus mental health" as the underlying problem of violence in the U.S. This bill addresses both important contributors, with common-sense measures to enhance gun safety without encroaching on Mainers' rights.

I am also writing this testimony as the mother of a soon to be 3-year-old, Miles. Of all my worries as a parent, one of the most persistent and distressing is his safety from gun violence, as the list of tragedies in the U.S. grows. The grim statistics haunt me, and my heart goes out to the thousands of families affected by gun violence yearly in this country.

As a primary care physician, I am all too familiar with the need for increased mental health access in Maine. This bill expands mental health services and helps to keep firearms from those in crisis and at risk of committing violence. While I strongly support these steps, I also advocate for the inclusion of a true Extreme Risk Protection Order to allow law enforcement to more quickly secure weapons in a crisis situation.

Mainers deserve policies to ensure gun ownership is more responsible and safer for everyone. Thank you very much for your consideration and your work on this topic.