

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Marya Goettsche Spurling, and I am from New Sharon.

I am testifying in support of [LD 2238](#) - An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases

I am a Family Physician who has practiced primary care, obstetrics, and hospital medicine in Somerset and Kennebec counties since 2016. I am also the mother of two young children. You may think that as a doctor, my job is to save lives. That is only somewhat true. Most of the lifesaving work that I do is not immediately obvious. I would far rather help a patient prevent a heart attack by promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity than to treat the effects of their heart attack in the hospital, or detect cancer early and even prevent it than treat the end stages.

In this moment, it is you in the legislature who have the opportunity to do true lifesaving work. That is the prevention of future deaths from gun violence. Studies have shown that waiting periods between the purchase and possession of a firearm significantly reduce deaths from homicide and suicide. I have attached and included a link to one such study for your review, but in summary, the 2017 study compiled 45 years of data and found that the states that required a waiting period for purchases reduced homicide death by 17% and saved 750 lives per year, and that expanding waiting periods to all 50 states would save an additional 910 lives per year.

This is an issue that I care about not only as a physician, but one that hits home personally. A former neighbor in my home community where I was raised died from suicide with a gun, and another prominent member of the community recently suffered severe injury from a suicide attempt with a gun. Their families are hurting and the community is reeling.

I am under no illusion that this bill will completely prevent all death, pain, and heartache from gun violence, or even that it would have prevented the suffering of my two neighbors and their families. But we must understand that public health measures such as these policy priorities work together to significantly reduce gun violence, and every prevented death is cause to celebrate. It is the waiting periods AND background checks AND accessible risk protection orders AND ban on assault weapons that together reduce deaths. These things are proven to be effective, just as during the Covid pandemic we learned that vaccines plus masking plus social distancing plus avoiding gatherings reduced death from a deadly virus.

The ripple effects of gun violence are catastrophic and heartbreaking. I appreciate your hard work on this issue and encourage you to join in saving lives.

Respectfully,

Marya R. Goettsche Spurling, MD, FAAFP

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