

TO: The Honorable Anne Carney
The Honorable Matt Moonen
Members of the Judiciary Committee

DATE: March 7, 2024

RE: An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System

Good morning Senator Carney and Representative Moonen,

My name is Emilia Toth. I'm a resident of Portland and a member of the League of Women Voters Youth Council. I have been closely following the proposed gun safety bills for this session, and I am testifying Ought to Pass on LD 2224.

I am a young person who has already seen gun violence hit close to home on several occasions. I grew up in Nashville, TN, and was shaken by the Covenant School shooting in May 2023, which took place 7 minutes away from where I attended high school. I moved to Maine and immediately felt safer, but the Lewiston shooting of October 2023 destroyed the feeling of safety that exists in this wonderful state I now call home. Both shooters suffered from mental health issues. If they had had proper health resources, government support, and background checks before firearm sales, these fatal events may not have happened.

I am hopeful that our state lawmakers will make our communities safer by working with Governor Mills on LD 2224. This law will provide violence prevention and crisis support to those who suffer from severe mental illness. Our nation continually fails our communities by refusing to provide necessary support for those who are suffering day to day, however, they make it all too easy for them to procure weapons. This bill is a vital first step in creating stricter legislature that ensures gun safety statewide. Creating crisis receiving centers and support programs through the Maine CDC could stop the perpetuation of gun violence from the very start. Additionally, background checks would alert officials to any reasons why someone should not possess a firearm, for example, a history of mental illness.

I am glad that Governor Mills has provided an opportunity for state lawmakers to ensure public safety from firearms, and I hope you will consider passing this extremely necessary and important bill. Every little action taken to achieve gun safety is a big step towards the decrease of gun violence statewide, and this law is the first step. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 2224.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,
Emilia Toth