

Testimony LD.2224

Lynn Murphy, LCSW, CADC

Monmouth, ME 04259

Bogwoman1@icloud.com

I support L.D.2224 and am heartened to see that the Governor is taking on the "Yellow Flag Law" and making ways to strengthen it yet, I feel it is not strong enough. I do not feel it represents the reality of the "mental health" professional personnel labor crisis in Maine and I also feel it continues to perpetrate the myth that individuals with mental health diagnosis cause violent shootings. It does not utilize the people that know the elevated individual the most, their, family, friends or co-workers a place in the process to directly file a complaint or take the individual's guns away without waiting for a policeman. In rural areas this is an important consideration.

Currently, it is almost impossible to find a mental health provider or agency such as ACT. That does not have a waiting list or is even taking clients. Formal evaluations often take months to get an appointment for. Open job listings for upper-level mental health workers can remain so for over a year. I appreciate all of the positive and exciting changes this law would bring however, there are very few providers out there that could do these evaluations in a timely manner or provide the support services until changes are made to attract more personnel.

Additional, recruitment and college assistance need to be provided now to ensure there is a direct path of new and fresh graduates coming to fill more and more need positions trained in crisis and trauma work. Especially in such a demanding field.

Once again, the myth that those with mental health disorders are the perpetrators of violent crime is being generated. Over and over again the research will prove this is not true. We have to focus on behaviors of people not just diagnosis. What if the evaluation shows that this person is not mentally ill. How will that affect the decision if they should have their fire arms returned to them?

Finally, this bill only speaks to law enforcement. Gun violence prevention cannot just be in the hands of law enforcement. It is a community responsibility to decrease it. Therefore, families have to have a direct channel to inform and legally remove a loved one's weapons if they have reasonable proof this individual is going to hurt themselves or others. In rural Maine this is essential. Sometimes the closest law

enforcement personnel are the state police. They are not an immediate responder at times due to geography. There have to be other options for reporting and handling threats.