

To the members of this committee,

My name is Reynolds Huard and I am a first year Bates student from Athens, Ohio. I am writing this testimonial to express my ardent support for LD2224 (An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System) and LD2238 (An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases) as well as to express my concern for the current state of gun safety.

Death, destruction, and despair have never known a better friend than a gun. A gun allows the bearer to uphold their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness while violating the same principles for those who cross their path. A gun allows one to cower behind a wild charade of ubermasculinity and power. A gun takes from its victim(s) what it gives its handler. With the number of people who die gun-related deaths steadily increasing every year, such violence can be considered nothing less than one of the most pressing public health epidemics and crises in the United States.

Beginning in Kindergarten, my peers and I were subjected to multiple active shooter drills each year, continuing throughout middle and high school. As traumatic as those situations were, my most memorable personal experience with gun violence comes from the mass shooting that occurred in Lewiston on the evening of October 25, 2023. I was so beyond lucky that day. I was safe in my dorm when I got a call from one of my friends, urgently asking where I was and demanding that I get somewhere safe as soon as possible. I was able to meet up with a few other students in our dorm building to watch the news, listen to police scanners and reports, and generally comfort one another. I spent the next few days holed up in my room. My roommate and most of my friends left campus, but I stayed put. I kept my door locked, my windows closed, and only left my room to get food or use the restroom.

To me, the scariest part of this whole situation is that we have very few mechanisms in place to prevent this kind of tragedy from happening again. Without legislative change, Mainers remain at risk for becoming the next victims to the American gun violence and mass shooting epidemic. Today, the members of this committee have the unique opportunity to protect their constituents and restore a sense of security to the great state of Maine. If passed, the two pieces of legislation presented before you today, LD2224 and LD2238, *will save lives*. It is for these reasons that I once again urge the members of this committee to vote ought to pass in this session, for the greater good of their people.

With respect,

Reynolds Huard