

Testimony of Penelope Ratz
Maine- Judiciary Committee Hearing
March 7, 2024

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen , Committee members, and staff.
Thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Penelope Ratz. I am a freshman at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and I strongly support LD 2224, “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine’s Firearm Laws and Mental Health System,” and LD 2238, “An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases.”

I am testifying today because gun violence in the United States is a national crisis that, without legislative action, will continue to take thousands of lives every year. LD 2238 and LD 2224 have the power to protect Maine citizens and begin to build a foundation for a safer future.

I was on campus during the events of October 25th in Lewiston. As I huddled together with my roommate behind a barricaded door, we called parents and friends to let them know we were alive, that we were inside, and that we didn’t know how much longer it would last. I remember seeing Lewiston in the headline of a national news website, and the full gravity of the situation sinking in. The fear that I felt in that moment was like nothing I have experienced before or since. I remembered my 5th grade teacher telling us to run in a zigzag in the event of an active shooter, because it would make us harder to hit. She assured us it was just a precaution.

Realizing that this is a reality in our country, that it can happen to anyone, was paralyzing. Going through what I did as a member of the Bates community, I can only imagine the fear, pain, and unspeakable grief experienced by those who lost loved ones in the tragic event. To prevent such heartbreaking losses to the Maine community in the future, it is imperative that we take measures so that these weapons do not fall into the hands of those capable of hurting others or themselves. These legislations have the power to save countless lives. I urge the members of the community to please vote “Ought to pass” on LD 2238 and LD 2224. This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time and consideration.