

Tom Berry
Kennebunk
LD 2224

March 7, 2024

To: Senator Anne Carney, Representative Matt Moonen, and Honorable Members of the Committee

From: Tom Berry

Re: Testimony in Support of LD 2224 and LD 2238.

My name is Tom Berry and I have lived in Kennebunk for 30 years. I am writing as a retired public school educator and concerned citizen to urge you to vote “ought to pass” for the two gun-safety bills being presented before this committee today:

The tragedy in Lewiston has clearly brought home to Mainers the fact that we are not immune to the kind of horror that has been occurring with all-too-much regularity in other parts of the country. However: while large-scale shocking events like this one garner most of the attention of a stunned public, the under-reported statistics about suicides-by-firearms reveal another aspect of the failure of our governmental system to protect the lives and welfare of its citizens. According to the most recent data from the CDC, the average national rate of gun-related suicide was 8.1 per 100,000 people. According to research by The Giffords Law Center, counties in Maine together - (with the single exception of the one outlier, Cumberland County, at 6.5) - have an average rate of 13.5 per 100,000. Buried within that statistic is the fact that our most rural counties are the ones most heavily impacted by what could, in many cases, be preventable tragedies.

LD 2224 “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System” would provide for at least some progress in addressing this public health crisis. It would prevent persons who have already been deemed to be ineligible to own a firearm by judicial entities outside of Maine from purchasing a gun in our state and it would also bolster our mental health system’s - and law enforcement’s - ability to assist those persons in-crisis before they commit acts of violence - self-directed or otherwise.

LD 2238 “An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases” would provide additional help in this regard. It would require establishment of a short span of time before certain transactions involving firearms could be completed so that law enforcement or mental health assessments could be made to ascertain that the gun purchaser is legally-qualified to possess such a weapon. Given the stakes involved, why is there any argument about having to wait a few days before taking a firearm home? Because it would be inconvenient?

I would suggest it is pretty damn inconvenient for the Mainer whose life is lost and for the families that are permanently shattered in the current epidemic of gun violence because our gun safety regulations are among the weakest in the nation.

Again, I urge that you vote “Ought to Pass” for both of these measures.

Thank you all for considering this testimony.