

## Written Testimony in Support of Gun Safety Measures:

To the Chairs and Committee Members--

My name is Matt Rigney, and I am a resident of Kittery Point, Maine. I am writing today to submit testimony in support of the following gun safety measures currently before the legislature. Those measures are LD 2086 (Automatic Weapons), LD 2238 (72-Hour Waiting Periods), LD 2237 (Mental Health) and LD 2119 (Suicide Prevention).

I support the passage of all these bills. To speak specifically to LD 2086, pertaining to Automatic Weapons: this measure does not go far enough. We need a complete ban on assault rifles, bump stocks, extended and large magazines--anything and everything to reduce the killing capacity of these guns and remove them from public access.

Since the Columbine Massacre, which will have happened 25 years ago this coming April 20, I have been horrified to witness both the sustained recurrence of killings due to gun violence in this country, and the complete inability of our society to address this horror. Both are indictments of our way of life--how enamored we are of violence, and how selfish and blind we are in demanding our 2nd Amendment rights be protected at all expense, including at the expense of thousands of lives, including hundreds of children, as well as at the expense of healthy and whole families, and the public peace.

This is not the tragedy of car accidents or cancer deaths. Gun massacres are sudden outbursts of horrific violence enacted by angry or unstable individuals, and enabled by insanely permissive access to weapons capable of vast destruction of human life and flesh in the space of seconds.

I am an educator as well as a graduate of Bates College from the Class of 1990. I am not writing to you today because the October 25 massacre happened in Lewiston. I have written my legislators in Maine and elsewhere for years to add my voice to those pleading to stop this horror. Lewiston was only the latest incident to cause me to write and show up at protests yet again.

I have never been shot at or been involved in one of these massacres, and yet they have adversely affected my life. After so many years of these massacres happening, now, whenever I go into any school or public space, I know automatically what I will do and where I will go if I hear the pop-pop-pop of automatic gun fire. The expectation of public massacres in America is so ingrained in my psyche-- as it is in millions of other Americans--that two days before Lewiston, I said to myself, "we are due for another one."

These massacres are obscenities, and our inability as a society to address them is also a form of obscenity. These are attacks on human dignity and they are affronts to human life, to our requirement to care for one another, and to the idea of the common good.

I am writing not only to protect myself and my loved ones. I am writing to protect my 15-year old daughter. Why should any child have to worry that they will be killed in a gun massacre? She had a false alarm at her school last year, but the students did not know it was a false alarm. The teacher responded, as she should have, as though it were real, and led the students in a panicked dash through the building and out the doors, across a playing field and into the trees. The students kept going, deep into the forest, because they were running for their lives. One girl urinated on herself because she was so scared.

What kind of monsters--inept, corrupt or otherwise--are those of you in positions of power who have the opportunity to end this horror by enacting meaningful legislation, and choose not to, for lack of conviction, a spine, or basic humanity to do so?

After 25 years of this, how is it that we are still having these discussions? How is it that I have to still spend my time, like so many thousands of others, to implore those of you in positions of power to use that power to enact laws that protect us? It's the most fundamental duty of any person in your position. Protect us as you would want your own child or family member protected. It's that simple. Pass these damn laws and do it now.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Rigney