

RE: LD2224 - *An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System, sponsored by Senator Peggy Rotundo and Representative Kristen Cloutier of Lewiston.*

Good Evening Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Andrea Truncali, I'm a resident of Portland, ME and an internist physician with a specialty in addiction medicine and public health. I'm also a parent who sends children to school each day.

I'm grateful to see LD 2224 and advocate in support of it, *with* amendments.

Many of my patients have lived through horrific trauma, including being held at gunpoint by an intimate partner who is violent and abusive. This was the case for one of my patients, someone who suffers significant PTSD which is difficult to heal as she lives in fear of the prison release date of the person who brutally abused her.....She is one of many. And in our state, her assailant, and others like them, can easily obtain a firearm.

Please support expanded background checks to limit this from happening. And expand further such that private sellers must also complete this check.

Second, our current yellow flag law is helpful but lacking –it is cumbersome and not current with evidence about who commits mass shootings. We know that it is not so much mental illness, but dangerousness that predicts violent behavior. Dangerousness can surface quickly and in the absence of mental illness. It is often precipitated by a stressor like a job loss, a relationship break, or increased substance use and includes “marked changes in behavior, demeanor or appearance, uncharacteristic fights or arguments, and telling others of plans for violence, a phenomenon known as “leakage.””¹

Changing the criteria from mentally ill to dangerous will more accurately capture risk, without adding unhelpful evaluations that delay a time sensitive process. Further, the law must empower families – those well positioned to detect emerging risk - so that they can raise a flag for a person who becomes a threat. The current law- even with the bill's amendments - is ripe with missed opportunity to protect people from gun suicides and Maine children and adults from mass shootings. Please strengthen and pass it.

Gun safety legislation is an area where you have unique power to protect lives. I hope that you will use it to support legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of people who are likely to be dangerous.

References

1. Dewan, Shaila. New York Times. What Are the Real Warning Signs of a Mass Shooting? Aug. 22, 2022