

Sarah Van Lonkhuyzen
Rockport
LD 2224

Testimony of Sarah Van Lonkhuyzen
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 Sarah Van Lonkhuyzen. I was born and raised in Rockport, Maine and now go to school in Lewiston at Bates College. Rockport was a sheltered and mostly safe place to grow up, but I had always heard horror stories of gun violence through the news, or people discussing it at school. Upon coming to Bates, I was aware that Lewiston has higher rates of crime and violence. Unfortunately, my first semester at Bates included experiencing a mass shooting. Having a sleepless night in the library and then being locked in our dorms for the next days following was not something I expected to ever have to endure. I will forever mourn for families and friends who tragically lost someone to gun violence that day of October 25, 2023.

I am testifying LD 2224: Governor's bill/Sponsored by Rep. Cloutier and Sen. Rotundo today because gun laws have an enormous impact on people with mental health issues. Recent data shows that an average of 145 people in Maine die by gun suicides and 12 are wounded by gun suicide attempts each year. Maine has the 18th-highest rate of gun suicides and gun suicide attempts in the US, and the best way to decrease these deaths is by limiting gun access. As someone with a suicidal family member, I would never wish for them to be in contact with a gun for the safety of themselves and others. We also know that Robert Car, the offender of the mass shooting in Lewiston had a history of mental health problems and should not have had access to a gun.

I encourage the members of the committee to vote yes on LD 2224.
This concludes my testimony. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here today.