



Supportive Testimony:
**LD 2237 “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by
Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources**

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services. My name is Angela Leclerc I am a practicing PA, a Gorham resident and today I am testifying on behalf of the Maine Association of PAs (MEAPA) where I serve on the board of directors. MEAPA is testifying in support of LD 2237 “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources.

MEAPA represents over 1,000 PAs practicing in Maine and the patients they care for. MEAPA has prioritized gun safety and expansion of access to mental healthcare have become priorities for our constituents and their patients in the wake of nationwide trends and shock of October’s shooting in Lewiston. It can and now *has* happened here.

I have been practicing as a PA for 19 years in Maine, all in acute care (hospitals) with most of my practice in critical care. Unfortunately, I have borne witness to many life-changing injuries and deaths related to firearms. These life-changing events, where patients are left permanently injured or dead, have been both accidental and intentional. They have been homicidal and suicidal. They have been elderly, middle-aged, young adults, and even children. I have had to tell parents, spouses and children that their loved one is deceased or forever maimed.

Unfortunately, my experience with mental health gun violence isn’t solely professional. When I was in high school, my friend struggled with mental health, unbeknownst to any of our friends and died by a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Another friend, a star football player and athlete, a standout student in all their AP classes, also died by self-inflicted gunshot wound. Two of my PA colleagues and two of my physician colleagues (and many more I didn’t know) have died by self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

Violence is a public health crisis, and this bill establishes the Office of Violence Prevention. This is a great opportunity to trial interventions with funding of new programs and initiatives and then track outcomes.

LD 2237 adds many important *TIMELY* and *ACCESSIBLE* safety nets for those suffering with mental health crises and in turn improves the safety of the individual and our communities. This bill



listens to the Maine citizens who struggle with mental illness and have lost loved ones to mental illness.

Many providers of mental health care do not have prescriptive authority due to their scope of practice. This severely limits the ability to treat patients in a timely manner. This bill will expand access to medication management services, including telehealth services, employee recruitment and retention incentives, so desperately needed in an area we continually fall short in.

Suicide prevention materials will be developed, created, and distributed through a partnership between the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Health and Human Services as well as the Department of Public Safety. These materials will be publicly available, allowing concerned family and friends to access, understand, question, and find support.

Finally, the establishment of a notification system for the dear and hard-of-hearing community during active shooter situations is imperative. The technology exists to do this, and we need to operationalize it. Additionally, the alert to all licensed firearm dealers in the state when a person is determined to be dangerous or in mental health crisis just...makes...sense.

Healthcare professionals have suffered alongside family, friends, loved ones and patients. Collaborating with healthcare professionals is the road to the solution. Let's do something and see if it works. See what pieces work and what pieces don't. Let us hypothesize, implement, evaluate, and improve upon. Approving nothing is not the answer. Doing nothing is complacency and Mainers need progress.

This bill is not the only answer; however, it is an important start. We need a multifaceted approach, one that includes stricter gun control laws and expansion of access to mental healthcare. This legislation will have a profound impact for Mainers, if not just the first layer in the foundation you can help build.

When you look in the eyes of your son or daughter, brother or sister, friend or colleague, know your position, report and vote on this legislation may directly impact their lives and possibly your own.



Thank you for your consideration and your work on this important issue. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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