

Testimony FOR LD 2283

An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public

Representative Arthur Bell
Senator Teresa Pierce
Distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary

Date: 4/1/202

Representative Bell and Senator Pierce and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Alice-Lee Vestner, and I am a resident of Yarmouth, Maine. I am a physician with a psychiatric specialty and have worked in this capacity for 20 years. Three years ago, I relocated to Maine from Rhode Island where they have a Red Flag Law. This was, in my experience, a very effective tool which quickly and in a targeted fashion temporarily limited a volatile individual's access to weapons. I offer testimony today in vigorous SUPPORT of LD 2282.

While psychiatrists and other mental health professionals are experts at diagnosing and treating mental illness, we are not experts at identifying who is going to commit gun violence. People who are at an elevated or immediate risk of committing acts of violence or self-harm are not necessarily mentally ill. To perform optimally, mental health professionals rely on willing and honest informants. If an individual is not able or willing to provide an accurate accounting of their thoughts and motivations, we rely on input from family members. Family members are often aware of a person's propensity for violence and their access to guns. Similarly, family members are in a position to notice relevant changes in behavior. In a crisis, time is of the essence. Suicide and gun violence occurs at the peak of a curve of desperation. We know that limiting access to weapons during the peak of distress is a key strategy to minimize suicide, and I suspect violence as well. LD2282 would cut out the middleman (mental health professionals) and make the process more streamlined. We also know that states with more restrictive gun legislation have fewer suicide deaths. The confluence of economic despair, social isolation and easy access to weapons has led to a crisis of gun violence in this country which is profoundly demoralizing. I strongly urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 2282.

Sincerely,

Alice-Lee Vestner, MD