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LD 2283

My name is Anne Coughlin. I have lived on Peaks Island since 2020, after moving to Maine from Colorado. I have been an advocate for sensible gun safety legislation since the early 1970s. The package of proposed guns safety laws you recently advanced to the full legislature represent several of the best evidence based strategies we have to protect lives without impinging on the personal right of responsible gun owners.

I am writing now to support LD2283. THANK YOU for hearing and responding to the many medical and law enforcement professional who, along with hundreds of Maine citizens, showed up two weeks ago to advocate for a true Extreme Risk Protection Order.

There is a reason these are called extreme risk orders. Extreme Risk needs extreme urgency for effective response.

My daughter daughter has struggled with lifelong mental illness challenges. Repeatedly over the years, my husband and I had to be front line advocates to keep her and her children safe times of crisis. When lives are on the line, everyone—families as well as law enforcement — need to have the ability to respond quickly.

But I strongly agree with the testimony you heard two weeks ago, emphasizing that in most cases mental illness is NOT the criteria that determines risk to self or others.

In the context of situational violence when guns are present, requiring a professional medical evaluation before seizing guns makes no sense. Maine is the only state out of the 21 with ERPOs that requires this, and there is no research to suggest the residents of all 20 other jurisdictions have been harmed by its absence. And not one of those state legislatures have moved to repeal or weaken their ERPO law once it was in place.

A timely, rigorous hearing process after guns have been seized—as delineated in this bill—is the key to guaranteeing that the individual whose guns have been seized has fair treatment. Reviews of how other states have implemented their Extreme Risk Protection Orders demonstrate that emergency requests which, on review by the court, do not meet ERPO standards are in fact denied during initial hearings. This bill provides clear, thorough guidelines for protecting the rights of the individual whose guns have been temporarily seized throughout the entire implementation process.

As a Maine resident I am delighted to see this proposed legislation builds on the excellent models that have been developed in other states, including several such as Colorado where gun ownership is a dearly held value. I urge the Judiciary Committee to forward LD2283 to the full legislature with a unanimous Ought to Pass.

Thank you for your attention, and for all you do for Maine.