

Janice Vance  
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Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am a 10-year resident of Kennebunk, and I have a college student graduating from USM in May, who plans to be an elementary education teacher. Her safety is very important to me. When I lived in Connecticut, my office was a mile from Sandy Hook School, so I saw, at close range, what families, friends and town leaders went through when 20 first graders and their teachers were murdered in 2012 by an angry young man who had access to military-grade weapons. Connecticut leaders responded to this tragedy by enacting legislation to allow families to petition the court to remove weapon from those threatening harm to themselves or others. To quote the late Maya Angelou, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." Here in Maine, although the current so-called "yellow flag law" has successfully removed firearms from people experiencing a diagnosed mental health crisis, it has inherent limits. Since the Lewiston shootings, we now "know better." The bill you propose is similar to what is used in 21 other states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont, all of which now have very low rates of gun-related deaths. Those states' laws provide for due process and have been found to be constitutional. I have reviewed the proposed bill language and am confident that if this bill is passed, Maine's very high suicide rate will decrease, and we will be much more capable of preventing mass shootings and domestic violence than we are now. This bill works very well in concert with the other gun violence prevention bills under consideration this session, and I hope you will pass them all.