

As a Family Physician with over 45 years of active practice, including 16 years of practice experience in rural coastal Maine, I am writing to support the passage of LD 2283: An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public. Throughout my career, I have encountered many occasions where patients have felt suicidal or have expressed paranoid or threatening thoughts. There have been numerous instances where family members called to inform me of worrisome thoughts, actions, and threats of harm and self-harm from their family members.

One particular incident stands out in recent years. Our patient, a young man plagued by mental illness and substance abuse became extremely paranoid and convinced that family members were poisoning him. He admitted to having firearms in the home and over 1,000 rounds of ammunition. Law enforcement were called on multiple occasions, at which point he would expressly deny any threats or harm to others, but privately his behavior was very concerning. Family members became concerned for their lives. Community members called our office about their fears. We even had a discussion at our office about watching for him coming into the waiting room, and what to do if he presented with alarming behavior, including the risk of a mass shooting. Under current laws, law enforcement were not able to intervene to temporarily remove his firearms for his and the community's safety or get him the help that he needed. It was only after he committed arson (which very luckily did not burn down the whole village) that he was able to get help and the community was assured of safety. Situations like this are especially concerning in a rural area like Deer Isle, with no local police department and a routine of delay of at least one hour before state police can arrive on the scene.

Implementing a red flag gun law in the state of Maine would provide an important tool for preventing gun violence and protecting public safety. It would have made a huge difference in this situation. By allowing law enforcement and concerned individuals to petition the court to temporarily remove firearms from individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others, such a law could help prevent tragedies before they occur. This proactive approach would enable authorities to intervene when warning signs of potential violence or self-harm are present, without infringing on Second Amendment rights. Red flag laws have been shown to be effective in reducing gun-related suicides and preventing mass shootings in states where they have been implemented, making them a valuable addition to Maine's existing gun safety measures.

Please vote YES to pass LD 2283: An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public.