

P. Lynn Ouellette  
Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians  
LD 2283

Testimony respectfully submitted in Favor of LD 2283 An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is P. Lynn Ouellette M.D. and I have had a private practice in psychiatry in Brunswick for over 30 years. I am also a Member of the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physician's Gun Safety Coalition.

As a psychiatrist, I have come to realize that there is a broad misunderstanding between the presence of a diagnosable major mental illness and the lack of mental wellness that can be manifested as rage, anger, the desire for revenge, feeling wronged and therefore wanting to punish others, intense feelings of retribution and a whole host of other dangerous states of mind all of which can escalate to violence. Often there are escalating warning signs, threats, recent crises or domestic violence, changes in behavior, demeanor or appearance, uncharacteristic fights or arguments, and telling others of plans for violence indicative of a crisis. Another potential crisis situation occurs with expressions of suicidal thinking in someone who has a known history of depression, has experienced a recent crisis or has come to exhibit signs of change in their mental state. It is often family members or concerned others who interact with these individuals who are the first to become aware of these red flag signs of potential harm. In Maine, 89% of deaths by firearms are suicides. We know from the study suicide that it is often a transient state of mind and an impulsive act for which there can be an intervention. However, an impulsive act with a firearm is nearly always fatal leaving no opportunity for intervention and lifesaving treatment, and it can tremendous psychological suffering to loved ones and many others. It is my opinion, as a psychiatrist, that we need to enable the Extreme Risk Protection Order to empower law enforcement to remove firearms from those who are determined to be imminently dangerous to themselves or others. The Violence Prevention Project, which is the largest study of mass shootings, has found that the majority of mass shooters exhibited specific identifiable red flag signs of crisis, changes in behavior or demeanor, expressions of aggression and especially agitation, leading up to the event, but in only 10.5% were hallucinations and delusions a causal factor (<https://www.theviolenceproject.org/key-findings/>). With an Extreme Risk Protection Order, there is an opportunity to remove firearms from someone at risk for using them in a suicide as well as in violence against others, such as in mass shooting, early on when law enforcement is alerted to those warning signs. Please let us take the strongest steps possible to keep all of our citizens safe by enacting a genuine Extreme Risk Protection Orders.

Thank you,

P Lynn Ouellette MD