

April 4, 2024

The Honorable Anne Carney
Chair, Judiciary Committee
Maine Senate
State House, Room 438
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

The Honorable Matt Moonen
Chair, Judiciary Committee
Maine House of Representatives
State House, Room 438
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Re: AMA support for LD 2283

Dear Chairs Carney and Moonen:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express our support for Legislative Document (LD) 2283, legislation to establish crisis intervention orders to protect public safety and reduce firearm-related injuries and death. Crisis intervention orders, sometimes called extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs), are court orders to temporarily remove firearms from individuals deemed at high risk to themselves or others. The AMA supports such laws as common-sense safety interventions to protect individuals in crisis, their families, and communities.

With more than 48,000 firearm-related deaths each year, firearm violence is a serious public health crisis. The AMA has extensive policy on firearm safety and violence prevention, including support for the establishment of laws allowing family members, law enforcement personnel, and others to petition a court for the removal of a firearm when there is a high or imminent risk for violence. We believe that the epidemic of firearm violence requires comprehensive, multifaceted public health solutions and that LD 2283 is one such critical strategy.

Crisis intervention orders target high-risk individuals based on behavior, regardless of mental illness diagnosis. Such laws give law enforcement, family members, or household members who observe an individual's dangerous behavior and believe it could be a precursor to violence, the authority to petition a court to temporarily remove firearms from the individual's possession and prohibit them from purchasing or receiving a new firearm. Crisis intervention orders can be particularly useful in preventing suicide and intimate partner violence homicide (IPV). Suicide is a leading cause of preventable death in the United States, and firearms are among the most lethal suicide attempt methods, with nearly 9 out of 10 attempts resulting in death.¹ In 2021, firearms were the most common method used in suicide deaths in the United States, accounting for more than half of all suicide deaths.² Likewise, firearms in a violent home increase the likelihood that IPV incidents will result in death. Approximately half of reported intimate partner homicides in the United States are committed with firearms.³ Because of this risk, laws have been enacted to remove firearms from those who commit IPV. Federal law prohibits individuals subject to certain

¹ Andrew Conner, Deborah Azrael & Matthew Miller, *Suicide Case-Fatality Rates in the United States, 2007 to 2014: A Nationwide Population-Based Study*, 171 *Annals Int Med* 12, 885-95 (Dec. 2019).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, "Suicide and Self-Harm Injury," <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>.

³ April M. Zeoli, Rebecca Malinski & Brandon Turchan, *Risks and targeted interventions: Firearms in intimate partner violence*, 38 *Epidemiologic Rev* 1, 125-139 (Jan. 2016).

restraining orders from purchasing or possessing a firearm and makes it illegal for individuals convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence assault to purchase or possess firearms. However, there are gaps in the law. LD 2283 is one avenue to help fill these gaps to prevent deadly IPV.

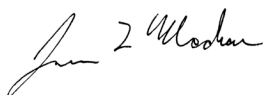
Crisis intervention order laws can also play an important role in preventing mass shootings, which have been increasing in frequency since 2015. A recent analysis of ERPO cases in six states found that 10 percent of nearly 6,800 legal intervention petitions involved threats to the lives of more than three individuals.⁴ The most common target for such threats was a K-12 school. As the authors note, though we cannot know with certainty whether these threats would have been carried out, we do know that ERPOs are being used in other states in substantial numbers to avert mass tragedy.

Research shows that crisis intervention orders can save lives. In 1999, Connecticut was the first state to authorize law enforcement to petition for the removal of firearms from individuals due to the risk of imminent personal injury to self or others. An evaluation of Connecticut's risk-warrant law showed that from 1999–2013, 762 risk-warrants were issued with suicidality or self-injury listed as a concern in 61 percent of cases and risk of harm to others a concern in 32 percent of cases.⁵ It is estimated that the law averted one suicide for every 10 to 11 firearm removals—saving 72 lives over a 14-year period. Additionally, most risk-warrant subjects did not have contact with the public behavioral health system in the year before the risk-warrant was served. However, in the year following firearm removal, nearly one-third (29 percent) of risk-warrant subjects received treatment in the state system, suggesting the risk-warrant provided an entryway into needed mental health and substance use related services. In nearly all cases (99 percent), police found and removed firearms when they conducted a search, with an average of seven firearms removed per subject.

The AMA applauds the Judiciary Committee for holding this important hearing. It is imperative that we address gun violence as a public health problem and work together to develop effective violence prevention strategies. The legislation pending before your committee is a critical step toward that goal. We strongly urge passage of LD 2283.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for this important legislation. If the AMA may be of assistance, please contact Annalia Michelman, JD, Senior Attorney, AMA Advocacy Resource Center, at annalia.michelman@ama-assn.org or (312) 464-4788.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD

cc: Maine Medical Association

⁴ April M. Zeoli, Shannon Frattaroli, Leslie Barnard, et al., *Extreme risk protection orders in response to threats of multiple victim/mass shooting in six U.S. states: A descriptive study*, 154 *Preventive Med* 1 (Dec. 2022).

⁵ Jeffrey W. Swanson, Michael A. Norko, Hsiu-Ju Lin, et al., *Implementation and effectiveness of Connecticut's risk-based gun removal law: Does it prevent suicides?*, 80 *Law & Contemporary Problems* 2, 179-208 (Aug. 2017).