

April 5, 2024

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

We are writing to you in support of the proposed legislation, LD 2283, ERPO.

Throughout our lives, we have known people affected by gun violence. As children, we still have vivid memories of a family who stayed at the home of our neighbors while their son was being treated at Maine Medical Center because of an accidental shooting by another child. They lived in northern Maine and a gun had not been locked up in the home. The children were playing with it, the gun went off, and this boy's life was changed forever.

I serve as a minister in Biddeford Pool. Within my church, there are several families who have lost beloved family members to suicide. As a teen, our neighbors lost their son to suicide. In just the last three months, I have known two families in the Kennebunk/Wells area who lost a son and daughter to suicide. The grief never ends.

Many in our family are teachers in public schools in Maine. They join me in support of this bill as the lives of their students and their own are at risk every day just by showing up to school. It should not be this way. Our sister is a social worker who also encountered this issue too many times.

We believe strongly that we need to do everything we can to protect our community from senseless gun violence. This bill would allow the authorities to take the necessary action to remove a firearm from a home should the individual be a threat to themselves or others. We are well aware of the mental health crisis in our state. Often people wait months to get the help they need, and many young people have spent weeks in the ER because there are not enough treatment beds available. We cannot adequately address this issue by only addressing mental health issues. It is too big a problem. We must ensure that firearms are not available to those whom their families or friends truly believe may be a threat.

As residents in the state of Maine, we are asking you to please pass this bill. We definitely believe that if we had this type of protection last fall, the lives of all those who died in Lewiston, our beloved hometown, would not have been lost. The time is now. We need to remove weapons from those who could use them to take their own lives or the lives of others. It is an urgent matter for many Mainers and our right to attend church, school or visit other public places without fear has been under threat for far too long. We have rights too and we demand action now. Thank you for your consideration and your work on behalf of all the citizens of our state.

Thank you,

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Kennebunk  
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