

Olivia Matthews
Orono
LD 2283

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Olivia Matthews (she/her) and I live in Orono and am a senior studying social work at the University of Maine.

I am testifying in support of LD 2283 - An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public. This bill will save so many lives who do not have access to adequate mental health services. I went to the State House this month for Social Workers Day and key speakers shared with us that over 10,000 individuals in Maine are on waiting lists for mental health services. These lists may extend well over a year for individuals waiting. Not to mention the individuals who have not even attempted to get on these lists due to such long waiting periods. Those who may be suffering from significant mental health issues with no relief in sight are significantly more likely to resort to other modes of relief. These attempts to meet their needs will most definitely result in several individuals resorting to suicide. With such easy access to firearms, these attempts will be significantly more deadly than other modes of suicide. Bangor Daily News reported that “While 90 percent of suicide attempts with guns end in death, only 4 percent of attempts with other means have such tragic consequences.” This bill gives families and individuals who are suffering due to a lack of mental health services a chance to seek immediate attention. This bill will save many of the lives of those on waiting lists, the lives of the families who will be left with the trauma and grief of their deceased loved one, and the lives that could be caught in the mass casualty of someone who is not in a clear state of mind who owns a firearm. Please consider the benefits of this mode of harm reduction. If it is known that Maine is in a mental health crisis we must use our knowledge of the past to plan for the negative impacts of firearms to those with untreated mental illness. The National Library of Medicine states “Mental illness is strongly associated with increased risk of suicide, which accounts for over half of US firearms-related fatalities.” Please use the privilege of this knowledge to save the lives of many Mainers suffering from untreated mental illness.

<https://www.bangordailynews.com/2024/04/02/opinion/maine-lawmakers-should-pass-gun-safety-bills-joam40zk0w/#:~:text=A%20true%20extreme%20risk%20protection,requiring%20a%20mental%20health%20evaluation.>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4211925/>