

Cathy Harris
Mechanic Falls
LD 2283

April 5, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for your kind attention.

My name is Cathy Harris. I am a mother, grandmother and a retired teacher. I live in Mechanic Falls, ten miles west of Lewiston. I am here in support of LD 2283.

The shooting on October 25th shocked our community. October 25th is our anniversary. We had decided to celebrate it that Friday night instead, at our favorite restaurant, Fish Bones in Lewiston. My husband is on the Incident Management Assistance Team. I'll never forget him getting that call. Except for coming home for short naps, he was gone for three days. I was home alone during a lock down. Like so many others, I sat in my house watching the news, heart broken for the victims and their families, praying that no one else would be harmed.

When people talk about taking their own life or, as was the case with the shooter in Lewiston, make threats to harm others, we need the means to implement Extreme Risk Protection Orders to quickly and efficiently remove access to firearms from these individuals who have expressed intent to harm others or themselves.

Law enforcement are asking for more tools to respond to these situations. The current yellow flag laws require a diagnosis of mental illness which law enforcement are not qualified to provide. People with mental illness are NOT more likely to commit a violent crime. And people who have escalated to the point of wanting to harm themselves or others are NOT necessarily mentally ill. The focus should be on behavior rather than a mental health diagnosis.

We need to do all we can to reduce the high number of gun related suicides in our state and we must enact laws to prevent another incident like the shooting in Lewiston. It is grossly irresponsible for anyone to throw their hands in the air and claim there was nothing we could have done. We can do something. The public is demanding it. That is why we are here today.

In the interest of public safety and the desire to save lives, I am proud to support this bill. I urge this committee to vote ought to pass.

Thank you