

April 5, 2024

Testimony in support of LD 2283 – An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public

Greetings Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Chris McLaughlin, and I am humbled to be the Executive Director of the Maine Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW ME). On behalf of our over 1100 members here in Maine, I'm honored to share thoughts on this important piece of proposed legislation. I also am a licensed clinical social worker with almost 25 years of experience providing and leading behavioral health services across a variety of treatment settings here in Maine. Most of my clinical career has been spent supporting children and families residing here in our great state.

NASW ME would like to take this time and offer our support for LD 2283, and we thank Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross for her leadership and advocacy on this important issue. As you know, the United States faces an epidemic of gun violence. Approximately 41,000 Americans die from gun violence each year. Horrifically, gun violence is now the leading cause of death for American children. Maine now has the highest gun death rate in New England. What happened in Lewiston on October 25, 2023 was sadly NOT an isolated incident. We have seen gun deaths, both homicides and suicides, rise all over Maine. Despite these statistics, though, Maine's current gun laws are comparatively quite weak.

- **Private gun transactions can take place without a background check**, meaning that people who are prohibited from owning weapons can easily obtain them.
- **Maine has not enacted an extreme risk protection order (ERPO or 'red flag') law** that would allow individuals and law enforcement to petition a court to have guns taken from a person who has shown that they pose a risk to themselves or others.
- **Maine does not regulate the sale of dangerous assault style weapons and high-capacity magazines.** These weapons of war pose a unique threat to public safety and have become the weapon of choice for assailants seeking to perpetrate mass casualty attacks for a reason.
- **Maine does not require even a brief waiting period between the purchase and possession of a firearm.** By delaying immediate access to firearms, waiting periods create an important "cooling off" period that can help prevent impulsive acts of gun violence, including gun homicides and suicides.

LD 2283 will address critical gaps in Maine's public safety laws and frankly, can save lives from gun violence while also preserving Maine's strong traditions of responsible gun ownership and respect for the Second Amendment. NASW ME believes that both of these things can exist at the same time: Safety and Freedom.

On behalf of social workers from all across Maine, I urge the Committee to vote Ought to Pass on this essential piece of proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



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