

Testimony in Support of LD 2283, “An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public”

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Emily Walsh and I am a student at Bates College in Lewiston. I am providing testimony in support of LD 2283, “An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public.”

On October 25th, 2023, my college town was rocked by one of the deadliest mass shootings in the nation. It is still painful to think back to this day and to the fear I felt when getting the text “Be careful... just heard there might be an active shooter in Lewiston,” wondering whether everyone I knew was safe. It hurts to remember the day I went back to work at my part-time job at a neurorehabilitation clinic, when I had to explain to my clients why they would no longer be able to go to their weekly bowling and billiards sessions at Just in Time and Schemengees. I have spent countless hours in the months since October trying to understand how we can prevent future tragedies of this kind, and more broadly, any sort of tragedy involving gun violence.

A major takeaway I have learned is that Maine’s gun laws are weak compared to many of our surrounding states in New England, and that we have opportunities to take a public health approach to changing them. I am grateful to lawmakers like Senator Peggy Rotundo and Representative Kristen Cloutier for sponsoring legislation aimed at enacting a 72-hour waiting period and investing in mental health services in Maine. I testified in support of both of these bills, and urged lawmakers to consider enacting a true Crisis Intervention Order. I am incredibly thankful to Speaker Rachel Talbot Ross for listening to our voices and introducing this Crisis Intervention Order bill. 21 states and the District of Columbia have enacted Crisis Intervention Laws, and research has shown that they work.¹ Studies in Connecticut and Indiana have shown that for every 10-20 crisis protection orders issued, one life was saved through averted suicide.² A study examining California’s extreme risk law between 2016 and 2018 found that 21 out of the 159 issued orders prevented a potential mass shooting.³

As it stands, Maine’s current version of a Crisis Intervention Law has extra, unnecessary steps, such as requiring law enforcement to put a potentially dangerous individual into protective custody, and for there to be a mental health evaluation declaring whether or not the individual is a danger to themselves or others.⁴ This updated Crisis Intervention Law would allow for a family member to go directly to the court to request temporary firearm removal from an individual who

¹ <https://erpo.org/>

² <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2021/policies-that-reduce-gun-violence>

³ <https://www.bradyunited.org/fact-sheets/what-are-extreme-risk-laws>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-cwVjj12E4>

has exhibited dangerous/violent behavior. Furthermore, this is under penalty of perjury, in order to prevent people from manipulating the system.

By enacting laws that are evidence-based and that work in conjunction with one another, we can create a safer Maine and ensure that no other communities have to go through what we went through in Lewiston. I urge you to please vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2283. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Emily Walsh
Lewiston