

April 5, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Nacole Palmer, and I live in Bowdoin, and I am the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

Soon after I moved here in 2016, I was driving to pick my step-daughter up from her elementary school. My car started pouring out this thick, white smoke, and when I stopped to turn into the school, the car just died...right there at the flashing light. I was new to Maine then. And I was both scared and unsure of what to do next. The sun had already set, and it was cold. Also, my stepdaughter was expecting me to pick her up, and I was still half a mile away. Within the first couple of minutes, no fewer than 3 people had stopped to ask how they could help. I demurred and walked the half mile to the school. And when I got there, one of the teachers asked if I was the person whose car had broken down; he ended up giving both of us a ride back to our house. That was my first lesson in the spirit of Mainers.

I learned early on that Maine is the kind of place where no one faces a challenge alone because neighbors are literally always ready to lend a hand, and strangers go out of their way to help other strangers in need.

Our beautiful state, filled with some of the kindest, hardest working, most down-to-earth people I have ever met, endured the type of tragedy that nightmares quite literally are made of on October 25. The pain was felt universally, though obviously much more deeply and horribly by the Mainers who lost their families and their friends.

And in true Maine fashion, the people of this great state have responded by taking action. First, of course, that meant comfort, donations, and aid that went directly to survivors and families of the victims. But Mainers didn't stop there. Mainers have shown up time and again, here in Augusta and across the state to demand that this legislature pass the laws that will prevent this type of tragedy from ever happening again in our beloved state.

From the 1000+ people who came here on January 3, to the 100 people who signed up to testify for gun safety bills in this very room a few weeks ago, to the daily letters to the editor and OpEds, it is clear where the people of Maine stand on this issue.

And you have listened. When you heard doctors, psychiatrists, social workers, and more tell you that Maine needs an extreme risk protection order that responds to dangerousness without a mental health evaluation, you took these experts seriously. When 11 Bates students testified through tears about the terror they felt that night and implored you to pass a true ERPO, you heard them. When Sergeant Adams of the Sanford PD testified that rural counties across Maine go unprotected for 6-8 hours (or more) when they have to devote an officer to take someone into custody and detain them through the many step process of a yellow flag order, you responded. Thank you. We are so grateful.

Because Maine families need a true ERPO. Our communities can't wait. We can't wait for another tragedy. We can't continue to do NOTHING while families are losing loved one after loved one to firearm suicide. Maine needs a solution that works efficiently, lawfully, and fairly, and that Maine-based solution is this extreme risk protection order.

I urge you to pass LD 2283 and thank you for your support and your time.