



Testimony of Melissa Hackett  
Policy Associate, the Maine Children's Alliance  
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

**LD 2283, An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public**

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Committee on the Judiciary, my name is Melissa Hackett and I am a policy associate with the Maine Children's Alliance. The Maine Children's Alliance is a state-wide nonpartisan, research and advocacy organization whose mission is to promote sound policies and best practices that improve the lives of Maine's children, youth and families.

I am providing testimony on behalf of MCA in strong support of LD 2283, An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public. We are grateful to the Speaker for bringing this important legislation forward.

We all want our children to grow up healthy and transition safely into adulthood. As parents and adults, it is our responsibility to ensure children can grow up free from violence in their communities. As decision makers, you have the ability to take meaningful action to make Maine a safer place for children and youth. One important way that Maine can do that is to enact a Red Flag Law, a policy that empowers family members and law enforcement to seek an Extreme Risk Protection Order - a court order temporarily restricting a person's access to guns when they pose a danger to self or others. Twenty-one states and Washington, DC have Red Flag Laws in place, including states like Florida, Colorado, and Michigan, which share Maine's strong tradition of responsible gun ownership. Notably, courts have largely upheld these laws as constitutional and consistent with due process requirements.

When a person is in crisis, loved ones and law enforcement are often the first to see signs that they pose a threat to themselves or others. Red Flag Laws empower law enforcement and immediate family members to petition a court for an Extreme Risk Protection Order. If a court finds that a person poses a significant danger of injuring themselves or others with a firearm, that person is temporarily prohibited from purchasing and possessing guns and required to turn over their guns while the order is in effect. This, in effect, serves to protect the individual from harm to themselves, as well as the larger community.

While Red Flag Laws are being enacted in response to the tragedy of mass shootings, these laws also address another American gun violence epidemic—firearm suicide. A 2015 brief from the Maine CDC found that the leading method of suicide among youths ages 10-24 were firearms, which were used in 47 percent of all youth suicides that occurred in Maine between 2010-2012.<sup>1</sup> Although the number of suicides by teens varies each year, in our recent KIDS COUNT

publication we reported that the average number of suicides per year by youth under age 20 in Maine was well above the national average<sup>ii</sup>.

**Maine's teen suicide rate has remained above the national rate**  
Five-year average suicide rate per year per 100,000 youth, ages 10-19,  
Maine compared to the U.S.



Source: National data: [CDC WONDER Online Database](#), and Maine data: [Child and Teen Suicide in Maine](#), KIDS COUNT

Maine is a small state, made up of tight-knit communities, and these communities are deeply impacted by the loss of these young lives. For a teenager going through a difficult time and considering suicide, reducing their access to a firearm can save their life. Nine out of ten suicide attempts with a gun result in death.<sup>iii</sup> In contrast, most people who attempt suicide by other means live—and do not eventually die by suicide.<sup>iv</sup>

It is our job to protect children and youth growing up in communities across our state. When there are family members in crisis in the home, and they have access to a firearm, the children in that home are not safe. When a teenager is struggling with a difficult experience, and they have access to a firearm, they are not safe. It is our responsibility as community members to ensure that during times when individuals pose a danger to themselves or others, they do not have access to a firearm. Through this proposed Extreme Risk Protection Order, we can ensure that we have a legal process for establishing this safeguard to keep our communities safe and to save lives. Thank you.

<sup>i</sup> Maine Department of Health and Human Services/Center for Disease Control. (2015). Suicide in Maine: A Data Brief – Youth (Ages 10-24): <http://www.maine.gov/suicide/about/data/docs/Suicide-in-Maine-Youth.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> 2023 Maine KIDS COUNT Data Book: [https://mekids.org/site/assets/files/2031/2023\\_kidscount\\_databook\\_interactive.pdf](https://mekids.org/site/assets/files/2031/2023_kidscount_databook_interactive.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> Miller, M, Azrael, D, and Hemenway D. The Epidemiology of Case Fatality Rates for Suicide in the Northeast. Annals of Emergency Medicine. 2004: 723-730. [https://mhdo.maine.gov/\\_externalreports/epidemiologyofcasefatalityrate.pdf](https://mhdo.maine.gov/_externalreports/epidemiologyofcasefatalityrate.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Owens D, Horrocks J, and House A. Fatal and non-fatal repetition of self-harm: systematic review. British Journal of Psychiatry. 2002;181:193-199.