

Opposition Testimony – LD 486

Representative Chad Perkins and members of the committee,

My name is Jonathan Danel, and I live in Saco. I am a primary care pediatrician practicing in South Portland and a member of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing to express strong opposition to LD 486. We can agree that it is important for the people of Maine to feel safe and protected from the threat of violence. However, bills such as LD486, if passed, would place the children and families of Maine in an unnecessary increased risk of significant injury and/or death.

As a pediatrician, I'm hearing often from my patients about how increasingly afraid they are of being shot. This is preventing children from wanting to go to school or feeling safe enough to spend time in a mall, or even outside with their friends and families. Unfortunately, their fears are becoming increasingly warranted. I feel it is my duty as a pediatrician to prevent the people of Maine and their children from becoming victims to new legislation that would put them in danger.

Based on historical data from similar legislation passed in Florida in 2005 (and 22 subsequent states), LD486 would effectively encourage the escalation of violence and also prohibit law enforcement, prosecutors, and juries from considering whether a person could have merely walked away from a conflict. A "shoot-first, ask-questions-later" mentality would be adopted. The implementation of Florida's Stand-Your-Ground law was associated with a 32% increase in firearm homicide rates and a 24% increase in overall homicide rates. In any given month, approximately 30 to 50 people across the country are killed as a result of Stand-Your-Ground Laws. In 79% of Florida Stand-Your-Ground cases, the assailant could have retreated to avoid confrontation, and in 68% of cases, the person killed was unarmed.

Not only is an SYG law not successful in protecting people, it's unnecessary under Maine's current law. Under current Maine law, people can use force, including deadly force, to defend themselves anywhere. While in public, a person cannot use force likely to seriously injure or kill someone if there is a clear way to leave the situation with complete safety. So, people with a legitimate reason to defend themselves are already fully protected under Maine's self-defense law, but there is also room to prevent any unnecessary violence if there is reasonable space to do so. So why do we need LD486 at all? There is no benefit here for anyone.

I urge you to consider the safety of your family, friends and the children of Maine when thinking about what this law would accomplish. Were this law to pass, it would only make Maine less safe and increase fear without any benefit in a time when many Americans, including children,

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continue to die regularly as a result of gun violence. This bill is incredibly dangerous and ought NOT to pass.

Thank you for your time. Sincerely,
Jonathan Danel, MD