

Hillary Shende  
Brunswick  
LD 486

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Hillary Shende, and I speak in opposition to LD 486.

Current self defense law in Maine already allows for the use of deadly force when it is not possible to safely retreat from a dangerous encounter out in public. Therefore, this law isn't needed.

All this law will do is cause harm. It will encourage anyone in a dangerous situation to feel free to shoot first and ask questions later, even if they could have removed themselves from a dangerous situation in complete safety. This is a horrifying idea. Our goal as a society should be to preserve lives, not take them, especially when it's completely unnecessary to do so. Why on earth would we want more Mainers to die?

And make no mistake, that's exactly what will happen if we pass this bill into law. The Rand Corporation has evaluated multiple studies examining the relationship between the presence of Stand Your Ground laws and firearm homicide rates in those states, and the correlation is clear. SYG laws are associated with significantly higher rates of firearm homicide. This tracks with what happened in Florida, the first US state to pass an SYG law. Following the passage of that law in 2005, the Journal of the American Medical Association found that firearm homicides in Florida rose by a whopping 32%.

In the year 2022, the CDC reported that the state of Maine had a rate of 11.7 firearm deaths per 100,000 people. Looking 100 other countries around the world, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the UNODC, reported the firearm death rate in the last year for which data was available, with the most recent year also being 2022. Maine's firearm death rate was higher than 87 of those 100 countries. This is an appalling level of gun violence. And this was the year BEFORE we had the mass shooting in Lewiston.

Please vote no on LD 486. No one wants more firearm deaths in Maine. We have way too many already.