

Testimony LD 486 / Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

March 17, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the committee. My name is Art Blank, and I live in Bar Harbor. I am in my 50th year as a Maine resident, a retired hospital administrator and more importantly a husband, father and grandfather. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today opposed to the passage of LD 486. Simply put, this proposed change to Maine law is incompatible with the responsibilities of gun ownership.

Current law recognizes what I was taught, what my wife and I taught our children, and what my grandchildren have been taught. Rights carry with them responsibilities. Under current Maine law, people can use force, including deadly force, to defend themselves anywhere. But 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. We have the right to have firearms, but why would we not continue to ensure the responsibility currently in Maine law, when completely safe, to avoid using deadly force or taking someone's life? As my grandchildren walk their hometown streets in Bangor, I want everyone to feel that level of responsibility, lest one of them become the next Treyvon Martin.

Various studies have shown increased violence as the result of stand your ground laws. According to the Journal of Human Resources, in any given month, approximately 30 to 50 people across the country are killed as a result of stand your ground laws, along with significant increases in firearm injuries resulting in emergency room visits and inpatient hospitalizations. The JAMA Network found stand your ground laws are associated with an 8% increase in both overall homicides and firearm homicides.

But, I go back to the very basic question of what do we tell our children and grandchildren if we strike the language "retreat from the encounter (with complete safety)", in favor of the philosophy of shoot first and ask questions later.

Thank you for your time, and I respectfully urge you to vote LD 486 Ought NOT to Pass.