

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the committee. My name is Nacole Palmer, and I am the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

I stand before you today, on behalf of our coalition that represents thousands of Mainers from Fort Fairfield to Kittery, to urge you to vote Ought Not to Pass on LD 486. If passed, this bill would make our communities less safe. By inviting people to use deadly force when they could just walk away safely, “Stand Your Ground” or “Shoot First” laws, as they are often referred to, have led to an alarming increase in gun violence in the states where they have been passed. Florida, the first state to pass a “Stand Your Ground” law, saw a 24.4% increase in overall homicides, and a 31.6% increase in firearm homicides as a result of passing this dangerous law. If Maine’s numbers were to follow that pattern, 7 more people would be murdered by firearms in our state every year. That’s outrageous...and clearly the wrong choice for Maine.

Our existing self-defense law already allows a person to use deadly force if they reasonably believe that it is necessary to prevent bodily injury or death. That is a reasonable protection that allows people to protect themselves, even to the point of deadly harm, if it is legitimately necessary. Our laws should not encourage unnecessary death, as this bill does. If someone can retreat in “complete safety,” which is what our current law says, then obviously, they should do so. This proposal encourages vigilantism and a shoot-first, ask-questions-later mentality that is dangerous and increases gun violence in states that have this irresponsible law on the books, leading to an 8% increase in overall firearm homicides attributable to these bills across the nation

Let’s work together to solve the actual problems of firearm violence that our state faces, with solutions that are data-based and proven to reduce firearm deaths and injuries. Vote Ought Not to Pass on this bill that has been proven to increase homicides and exacerbate violence, and would endanger our communities.