

John Whitsitt
Aroostook County
LD 1109

Members of the Committee, Regarding LD 1109:

My name is John Whitsitt and I've been an Aroostook County (and Maine) resident and voting Democrat since 2020. I'm writing to you now in opposition to LD 1109.

To help understand my perspective: I am a democrat who moved to Maine 5 years ago expressly because of, among other reasons, the state's positive stances on the second amendment. I also lead the Maine chapter of a growing liberal gun club, am a member of another gun club that focuses on the needs of marginalized populations of gun owners, and I moderate a Maine-focused apolitical social media gun group.

While I am not "representing" any of those groups in this testimony, my involvement in them lets me know that a) The ranks of democratic and non-traditional gun owners are growing quickly and that b) I am far from alone in those groups in opposing this bill.

With that in mind, I ask that you please consider the following points:

1. Your constituents are increasingly subject to the threat of violence from others and should not be deprived of the necessary tools to defend themselves - including magazines that exceed a capacity of 10 rounds (particularly handguns). While the role of law enforcement is critical, they simply cannot be everywhere all of the time - particularly in our homes and particularly in rural areas such as, well, most of the state. The fact that 17A-§104 "Use of force in defense of premises" exists is a testament to this. Instead, please consider funding safety training, safe handling, non-violent defense and deescalation techniques, and other similar efforts to help your constituents feel and be more safe - not less .

2. As someone who has worked for and around government extensively in the past, I understand that in our rush to "do something", we often spend political capital on laws that will have, at best, marginal impacts on the problems we are trying to solve. Unfortunately, this usually ends up being a scenario where, having made a marginal improvement, the focus of the body politic and our representatives moves on and the core problems remain. In the case of a magazine capacity ban, you may - or may not - make any difference in anyone's life (statistically, "not"). But having "passed a gun control bill", the chance of returning to root cause issues that almost certainly *will* improve Mainers' safety, security, and well being in this area lessens. So, please, where we have a suicide problem, improve our mental health treatment options. Where we have problems with crime, write bills to help intervene before crime is committed. Where we have mass violence problems, fund legislation to identify why it occurs - whether for social, political, or economical reasons - and mitigate the actual causes.

3. The magazine capacity ban being proposed, if I understand it, applies to nearly any gun. This means that nearly every Mainer who owns a handgun with a standard capacity magazine that comes with the handgun will become a criminal unless they are paying close attention to changes in law and act within 180 days to get rid of or destroy property they have paid for and that has almost nothing to do with the threat of mass shooting that this law appears to be attempting to deal with. I don't have the numbers, but I imagine that's a lot of Mainers that could be hurt by this law - potentially in life changing ways - to no real positive effect. And this still doesn't address the many rifles (such as 22lr guns typically used for training, target practice, and other perfectly normal activities) that could benefit from magazine capacities over 10 rounds.

4. Finally, consider that there are limits, in a free society, to what even our representatives acting with best intent can accomplish when folks wish to do harm to each other and that often where a problem manifests (gun violence) is not where it is best dealt with. In the case of Maine, if there IS an escalation in gun violence, consider that we were doing relatively ok with guns before now (especially when

compared to other states) and that, perhaps, as appealing as a fast and easy answer like magazine capacity limits might seem, the cause of any change - and so the solution - likely has little to do with guns or our access to them.

In closing, thank you for reading this, thank you for caring about your constituents, but please find a better way to support our needs, safety, and security.

Respectfully,
John Whitsitt