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LD 1109

Introduction

Good morning, members of the Judiciary committee. My name is Charles Ellis, and I am a resident of Westbrook Maine. I am here to respectfully voice my opposition to LD 1109, which seeks to limit the carrying capacity of firearms to 10 rounds, based on the assertion that this will reduce gun violence. While I share the goal of ensuring public safety, I urge you to reject this bill due to the absence of credible evidence supporting its effectiveness, its infringement on the rights of law-abiding citizens, and its failure to address the root causes of violence.

Lack of Evidence Linking Magazine Capacity to Gun Violence Reduction

Proponents of this bill claim that restricting magazine capacity will reduce gun violence, yet this assertion lacks robust, consistent data to back it up. National and state-level studies have repeatedly shown no clear correlation between magazine capacity restrictions and reductions in gun violence. For example, the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban, which included a 10-round magazine limit, was studied extensively. A 2004 report commissioned by the Department of Justice concluded that the ban's effects on gun violence were "mixed" and that any impact was "too small to measure reliably." After its expiration in 2004, no significant spike in gun violence was observed, further casting doubt on the effectiveness of such measures.

In Maine specifically, gun violence remains low compared to national averages. According to the Maine CDC, the vast majority of firearm deaths—over 85% in recent years—are suicides, not homicides or mass shootings where magazine capacity might theoretically play a role. Homicides, including those involving firearms, account for a small fraction of deaths, and there's no evidence from Maine's own data that high-capacity magazines are a driving factor. This bill hinges on an unproven assumption rather than addressing the real issues, like mental health or illegal firearm trafficking.

Impact on Law-Abiding Citizens

This legislation would disproportionately burden law-abiding firearm owners. Many standard firearms—used for self-defense, hunting, or sport—come equipped with magazines exceeding 10 rounds. Forcing owners to modify or surrender these legally purchased items under threat of a Class D criminal charge is an unjust penalty on those who follow the law. In a state like Maine, where self-defense in rural areas is a practical reality for many, reducing magazine capacity could hinder individuals' ability to protect themselves effectively, especially in situations involving multiple threats—like wildlife encounters or rare but possible criminal incidents.

Moreover, enforcing this law would be a logistical nightmare. How will the state verify compliance among tens of thousands of gun owners? The cost and effort would divert resources from proven public safety measures, like funding mental health services or policing violent crime.

Root Causes Ignored

Gun violence is a complex issue tied to socioeconomic factors, mental health crises, and illegal firearm use—not the equipment law-abiding citizens own. Maine's permitless carry laws and low violent crime rates demonstrate that responsible gun ownership is not the problem. Instead of symbolic restrictions with no proven impact, we should invest in community programs, mental health support, and cracking down on the small minority who misuse firearms illegally. This bill offers a feel-good solution that fails to address these underlying causes.

Conclusion

I urge you to reject 1109 because it lacks empirical support, unfairly targets law-abiding Mainers, and distracts from meaningful solutions. Let's focus on policies grounded in data and respect for our constitutional rights, not knee-jerk measures that sound good but do little. Thank you for your time and consideration.