

Dane Courtois
Hiram
LD 998

Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I submit this written testimony as a Mainer fiercely dedicated to individual liberty and the Second Amendment, urging you to oppose LD 998. This bill, which restricts an employer's right to prohibit employees from storing firearms in vehicles on private property, is an egregious overreach of government authority. It violates the principles of personal freedom, undermines property rights, and thrusts the state into matters best left to private negotiation. Maine's greatness stems from its respect for self-governance, not from legislative fiats dictating terms across every parking lot from Madawaska to York.

Liberty is the right to control one's own life—your labor, your possessions, your choices. Since 2015, Maine's constitutional carry law has affirmed that we can responsibly exercise our Second Amendment rights without excessive oversight. LD 998 turns that principle upside down by compelling employers to permit firearms in employees' vehicles, overriding their own policies. Consider a mechanic in Augusta parking at a garage or a clerk in Ellsworth leaving her car at the shop—under this bill, their employers lose the autonomy to enforce a “no firearms” rule. This isn't a defense of rights; it's a theft of one person's liberty to placate another's.

Private property is the cornerstone of a free society. If I run a business—whether a lumberyard in Houlton or a café in Camden—I set the standards on my land. LD 998 tramples that right, transforming private spaces into state-regulated firearm zones. Yes, employees have freedoms, but so do property owners—neither should be subjected to a law that arbitrarily favors one over the other. A libertarian understands that government's role is not to micromanage every workplace dispute; it's to step aside and let individuals resolve their differences. If a worker dislikes a “no guns in vehicles” policy, they can bargain, walk away, or park elsewhere—not demand a legislative cudgel.

The claim that this enhances safety is a hollow pretext. An armed populace can deter harm—whether it's a concealed carrier in Lewiston or a fisherman in Machias with a shotgun in his truck. But mandating that option on private property doesn't bolster security; it sows discord and confusion. States like Georgia, with similar laws, see businesses bristling at lost control, while employees still butt heads over enforcement. Maine stands apart—our low crime rate and ingrained gun culture prove we don't need this clumsy intervention. In 2023, our highways logged more deer collisions than gun incidents, yet LD 998 stirs a hornet's nest where peace already reigns.

Supporters may argue this protects workers' rights, but it's about power—inserting the state where free people should reign. A carpenter in Brunswick should settle this with his employer, not lean on Augusta to tilt the scales. Free Mainers don't need bureaucrats policing their gloveboxes or their gravel lots. Our sheriffs, strained across sprawling counties like Oxford or Knox, have better things to do than enforce this intrusion.

I respectfully call on the Judiciary Committee to reject LD 998. Maine flourishes when we safeguard liberty—letting workers and employers chart their own course, unencumbered by state overreach. Keep government out of our vehicles and off our property. That's the Maine I stand for. Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,
Dane Courtois