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March 25, 2025

Subject: Testimony Against Bills Seeking to Weaken Gun Safety Regulations

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I work as a Pediatric Hospitalist in Lewiston, and in the aftermath of the 2023 mass shooting, I also founded the group Maine Providers for Gun Safety. **Please accept this testimony in opposition to the three bills outlined below:**

LD 424: An Act Concerning the Concealed Carrying of a Handgun by an Individual Who Is 18 Years of Age but Under 21 Years of Age

In Maine, you must be 21 years of age to purchase a handgun. Under current federal law, the minimum age to purchase a handgun from a licensed dealer is 21 years of age. These policies exist because we know the risks of handgun possession at this young age is risky. A 2020 study demonstrated that policies restricting the sale of handguns to individuals 21 years or older were associated with a 35.5% reduction in firearm suicides among adolescents.¹ The statistics for homicides are even more striking: 18 to 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at over triple the rate of adults 21 years and older.² As pediatricians, we know that our patients don't magically gain maturity & responsibility on any specific birthday, but the evidence does highlight that we should be cautious in loosening firearm safety regulations in this age group. As a result, **we urge you to vote against LD 424.**

LD 829: An Act to Standardize the Laws Regarding the Carrying of Concealed Handguns in State Parks

The AAP supports location restrictions for firearms.³ "As smoking is restricted in certain public places, firearms should have similar restrictions (airlines, hospitals, sports stadiums, schools, and other public places.)" Given that our state parks currently require an individual have a valid permit to carry a concealed handgun in state parks, **we urge you to vote against LD 829** which would loosen this requirement, placing park employees and visitors, including children, at greater and unnecessary risk.

LD 988: An Act Regarding an Employer's Authority to Prohibit an Employee from Storing a Firearm in the Employee's Vehicle

News reports recently have highlighted an uptick in firearm thefts from vehicles in Maine.⁴ This bill would not only allow for greater opportunities for criminals gaining access to firearms via theft, but also increase the potential for workplace firearm violence. Research has shown that workplaces that permit firearm possession at work experience a nearly 7-fold increase in workplace homicides.⁵ **We urge you to vote against LD 988** and allow employers to enact policies that keep their workplaces safe.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics supports evidence-based and common-sense gun safety legislation that can help address the epidemic of gun violence – now the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States. These pieces of legislation are dangerous and do not aim to improve firearm safety here in Maine.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I apologize for not being able to testify in person and would be happy to attend the work session if you would appreciate our input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson" followed by a stylized flourish.

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP
Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Founder, Maine Providers for Gun Safety

¹ Raifman J, Larson E, Barry CL, et al. State handgun purchase age minimums in the US and adolescent suicide rates: regression discontinuity and difference-in-differences analyses. *BMJ*. 2020;370:m2436

² Everytown Research analysis using FBI Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) and US Population Data obtained from CDC WONDER, 2022.

³ Lois K. Lee, Eric W. Fleegler, Monika K. Goyal, Kiesha Fraser Doh, Danielle Laraque-Arena, Benjamin D. Hoffman, THE COUNCIL ON INJURY, VIOLENCE, AND POISON PREVENTION; Firearm-Related Injuries and Deaths in Children and Youth. *Pediatrics* December 2022; 150 (6): e2022060071. 10.1542/peds.2022-060071

⁴ Riccitelli, R. R. (n.d.). *Portland, maine, police warn: Firearms stolen from unlocked vehicles on the rise*. 94.3 WCYY. Retrieved March 26, 2025, from <https://wcy.com/portland-maine-firearms-stolen-unlocked-cars/>

⁵ Loomis D, Marshall SW, Ta ML. Employer policies toward guns and the risk of homicide in the workplace. *Am J Public Health*. 2005 May;95(5):830-2. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2003.033535. PMID: 15855460; PMCID: PMC1449263.