



*Maine Gun Safety Coalition Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1487: An Act to Support Community Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs*

Senator Ingwerson, Representative Meyer, and esteemed members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Nacole Palmer, and I serve as executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

I used to believe that violence—and specifically gun violence—was something that I would surely never have to encounter in my life. Perhaps you remember having felt that way at some point in your life, too. I thought gun violence sounded terrible, don't get me wrong. But it was something that *other* people in *other* places would have to deal with...surely not me. That was before a friend of mine in 7th grade was beaten with a gun and ultimately killed. Before the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary took 20 children half an hour from my then-home in Connecticut. Before a gun took the life of one of my family members. Before the Lewiston mass shootings took 18 beloved Mainers, including the son of my friend Arthur Barnard, half an hour from where I live now. Before the weekly and sometimes daily news of shootings on Maine streets in Lewiston, or Sabattus, or Portland.

The sad truth that I have learned, and what I imagine we have all learned to some extent, is that no place and no person is immune from gun violence—no matter how much we may want to convince ourselves otherwise. I also believe that passivity in the face of the sheer number of gun tragedies that take our fellow citizens amounts to complicity. This problem will not solve itself...clearly. It will, in fact, take all of us.

The creation of the Maine Office of Violence Prevention in the wake of the Lewiston mass shootings of 2023 was a welcome development, and I was proud that this body passed that bill, initiated by Governor Mills, into law last year. In doing so, Maine joined about a dozen other states that have similar offices. The office just got a director this calendar year and is still in the process of hiring staff, as I understand it. I am hopeful that under the leadership of Director Bourque, the office will do great work to prevent violence in our state.

The work of preventing violence, including gun violence, has many facets. In addition to strong laws, preventing violence takes time, people, and accurate data. And all of those things take resources.

I don't need to tell you that funding for pretty much anything in our government is uncertain right now. We live in an incredibly uncertain time. This law would allow for the office to seek the funding it needs to do its excellent and much needed work of saving Maine lives.

I hope that it will gain the unanimous support of this committee, which I believe it deserves. And I thank you for your consideration. Please vote Ought to Pass for LD 1487.