

Dana Hunnewell
Bingham
LD 1299

Chairpersons, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dana Hunnewell, and I am writing to respectfully express my opposition to LD 1299, “An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles.”

While I support responsible firearm storage and the promotion of public safety, this bill raises several concerns regarding legal overreach, practical enforcement, and the rights of lawful gun owners in Maine.

First, this bill overextends government authority into the private conduct of responsible firearm owners. It criminalizes the act of storing a handgun in a locked vehicle unless the handgun is also locked in a hard-sided container. This presumes negligence even in circumstances where the vehicle is parked on private property, in a secure area, or where the firearm is otherwise inaccessible. Responsible citizens who take appropriate precautions should not be treated as violators of the law based on one-size-fits-all storage mandates.

Second, the proposed requirements present an unnecessary logistical burden. Not all firearm owners travel with hard-sided, lockable containers. In practice, this bill would force individuals to purchase and carry specific equipment just to legally store a firearm in their vehicle—even temporarily. This is especially problematic for those who need to enter restricted areas, such as government buildings, where firearms are not permitted. The law would penalize them for simply complying with other legal restrictions.

Third, the bill duplicates existing laws that already address negligent firearm storage and access by unauthorized individuals. Maine law already provides remedies when irresponsible storage leads to harm or misuse. LD 1299 imposes penalties even when no harm occurs, no access is gained, and no crime is committed, creating an unnecessary layer of regulation.

Enforcement of this bill would also be problematic. It is unclear how violations would be identified without intrusive inspections or searches. This opens the door to potential abuse, selective enforcement, or erosion of privacy rights—particularly in rural areas or among lower-income individuals who may not have access to high-cost storage equipment.

Beyond logistical and enforcement issues, this bill risks setting a concerning precedent. By regulating how firearms are stored in private vehicles, it lays the groundwork for further restrictions on firearms in homes or other personal spaces. This gradual expansion of regulatory authority could lead to significant impacts on lawful gun ownership in Maine over time.

Finally, LD 1299 lacks supporting data that clearly links unsecured handguns in locked vehicles to increased rates of crime or accidents in the state. Legislation of this nature should be driven by evidence, not hypotheticals. If the goal is to promote safety, a better approach would include education initiatives, voluntary guidelines, or incentives for secure storage—not civil penalties.

In conclusion, while the intent behind LD 1299 may be safety-oriented, the bill as written is overly broad, impractical, and unnecessary. It penalizes law-abiding citizens, creates challenges in enforcement, and infringes on personal responsibility and constitutional rights. I urge the committee to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 1299.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.