



Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
Testimony in Opposition to:

L.D. 208, *An Act to Eliminate the 72-hour Waiting Period on Firearm Purchases*
L.D. 1062, *An Act to Eliminate Background Checks for Private Sales of Firearms*
L.D. 1230, *An Act to Abolish the 72-hour Waiting Period for a Gun Purchase*

April 16, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Heide Lester, and I am the Deputy Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We oppose L.D. 208, L.D. 1062, and L.D. 1230 as these bills would run counter to our state's efforts to reduce gun violence in Maine, which has the highest gun death rate in New England.¹

LGBTQ+ people are more than two times as likely to be victims of gun violence than their straight and cisgender peers.² Since 2013, nearly two-thirds of fatal violence toward transgender and gender-expansive people involved a gun; the majority of those victims were black women under the age of 30.³ The LGBTQ+ community is also disproportionately impacted by suicide, in no small part due to the discrimination and bias that are on the rise around the country.⁴ The combination of a lack of adequate laws to prevent gun violence and animosity towards the LGBTQ+ community has led to the loss of lives as well as immense harm and trauma caused by violence.

By delaying the immediate ability to purchase firearms, waiting periods create an important "cooling off" period that can help prevent impulsive acts of gun violence, including gun homicides and suicides. In fact, waiting periods have been shown to reduce gun homicides by roughly 17% and gun suicides by 7–11%.⁵ According to a 2019 study, 85% of non-gun owners

¹ Lawlor, Joe. "Maine's Gun Laws Rated as among the Most Lax in the Nation." *Press Herald*, 5 Nov. 2023, www.pressherald.com/2023/11/05/maines-gun-laws-rated-as-among-the-most-lax-in-the-nation/.

² "Facts and Statistics About the Impact of Gun Violence on LGBTQ+ People." *Sandy Hook Promise*, Oct. 2024, sandyhookpromise.org/blog/news/facts-and-statistics-about-the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-lgbtq-people/

³ "Gun Violence Prevention." HRC, www.hrc.org/resources/gun-violence-prevention.

⁴ Haas, Ann, et al. "Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Populations: Review and Recommendations." *Journal of Homosexuality*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3662085/.

⁵ Luca, Michael, et al. "Handgun Waiting Periods Reduce Gun Deaths." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29078268/.

and 72% of gun owners in the US support mandatory waiting periods for firearm purchases,⁶ further corroborating the fact that waiting periods are both desired and needed.

Requiring background checks on all gun sales is another proven way to reduce gun violence. State laws requiring background checks for gun sales are associated with lower firearm homicide rates,⁷ lower firearm suicide rates,⁸ and lower firearm trafficking.⁹ By requiring background checks for private sales, the legislature made it harder for criminals to obtain guns, and there is no data-driven reason to undo the protections recently put into place.

We urge you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on L.D. 208, L.D. 1062, and L.D. 1230. Please reject these attempts to take us backward.

Thank you,

Heide Lester (they/them)

⁶ Dixon, Graham, et al. “Public Opinion Perceptions, Private Support, and Public Actions of US Adults Regarding Gun Safety Policy.” *JAMA Network Open*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Dec. 2020, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7756237/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7756237/).

⁷ Siegel, Michael, Boine, Claire. “What Are the Most Effective Policies in Reducing Gun Homicides?” *Rockefeller Institute of Government*, 2019, rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/3-28-19-Firearm-Laws-Homicide-Deaths-Brief.pdf.

⁸ Fleegler, Eric, et al. “Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States.” *JAMA Internal Medicine*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23467753/.

⁹ Webster, Daniel, et al. “Preventing the Diversion of Guns to Criminals Through Effective Firearm Sales Laws,” *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*, muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/oa_monograph/chapter/757454.