



Maine Gun Safety Coalition Testimony in SUPPORT of LD 1743: An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms Within Their Municipal Buildings and Voting Places and at Their Municipal Public Proceedings

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Nacole Palmer. I live in Bowdoin, and I serve as the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

I respectfully urge you to vote Ought To Pass on LD 1743. This bill would not create a blanket prohibition against carrying firearms on municipal property statewide, but rather would allow town officials to determine whether a prohibition is appropriate for their municipality and if so, which offices or official proceedings they feel should not have firearms present. This law would help municipal officials feel safer and be safer when they are doing the vital work of administering our communities. Municipalities may choose whether imposing any firearm prohibitions at all is in alignment with their values, and then may choose which buildings, proceedings, or polling places should not have firearms present. No town would be required to accept a blanket prohibition, or any at all if they do not feel one would be in alignment with their values.

Many government facilities nationwide - including courthouses, airports, schools, and state and federal offices - already prohibit not just firearms but anything that could be used as a weapon on their premises. Many privately owned facilities, such as hospitals, have the same restrictions. At the Maine State House, all members of the general public must undergo a security screening before entering the building to make sure that legislators can feel safe when doing their vital work, some of which may be contentious or controversial. Local officials deserve to feel the same sense of security if they deem it necessary. This also serves to help the general public feel secure when they are conducting business in their town offices, participating in municipal governance, or casting their ballots.

Any local ordinance passed under this law would need to explicitly designate specific premises and/or functions that would have a restriction in place, and these locations in turn would need to have a prominently displayed notice outdoors to prevent any confusion. The restrictions are also strictly limited to local government operations - if a

municipality restricts firearms at a town meeting held in a public forum, the restriction applies only during the meeting.

This law is not a solution in search of a problem, either. Former Augusta Mayor David Rollins recently told MGSC about a man who posted frequently on the internet about using firearms in a violent manner and attended many city council meetings while openly carrying a handgun. Credible threats and harassment against local officials has been a growing problem in Maine in recent years, which has made it difficult for municipalities to retain key staff.¹ LD 1743 would allow these officials and other Maine residents the same peace of mind in the workplace enjoyed by most other government workers. Let's allow municipalities and local leaders to make the choices that best suit their community's needs in this very important regard.

Please help protect our communities by voting in favor of this common sense proposal.

¹ <https://wgme.com/news/local/election-clerks-report-harassment-leading-to-more-turnover-in-the-position>