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Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Opposition to

LD 885 - *An Act to Allow Certain Persons with a Permit to Carry Concealed Handguns to Possess or Discharge a Firearm on School Property*

May 7, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am providing testimony in opposition to LD 885 on behalf of the Maine Municipal Association's (MMA) elected 70-member Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). MMA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit member service organization and aims to help provide policy solutions that work for all residents in Maine and the LPC guides the advocacy efforts and establishes positions on bills of municipal interest.

The only weapons that should be allowed in a school setting are those carried by well trained, annually certified, clearly identifiable school resource officers who are currently certified law enforcement officers. The role of a police officer in a school setting extends far beyond physical security. These professionals are deeply connected to their school community and establish important school-community relationships. These officers usually are armed, and in uniform, making them distinguishable in an emergency by outside responders should that be necessary.

The act of passing a 5 year limited look back on criminal history that enables an individual to obtain a concealed handgun permit does not mean that an individual is trained adequately to safely carry in a child centered facility. Not all risky behavior prohibits an individual from obtaining a concealed permit, and the permit process only allows for a 5 year review of possibly risky behavior that does not result in a charge to be considered in the discretionary elements of the review process.

A non-law enforcement officer carrying a weapon in a school is a liability to the safety of first responders, indistinguishable from an armed perpetrator, and unlikely to carry enough personal liability insurance to mitigate the risk for potential lawsuits occurring from negligent behavior if they are not employees of the school district. If they are employees of the school, this would force a municipality to assume greater liability for tort claims protections and result in an uncontrollable fiscal note as the act of carrying a concealed handgun permit alone is not proof of skill or lack of risk.

As noted in previous testimony, well trained individuals are encouraged to join any police department where they will learn more vital community skills necessary and needed by schools for safety and security. Officials ask that you protect first responders from needing to sort through potential threats in these spaces by only allowing certified law enforcement the authority to carry weapons in schools and vote ought not to pass on LD 885.