

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO

L.D. 885—AN ACT TO ALLOW CERTAIN PERSONS WITH A PERMIT TO CARRY CONCEALED HANDGUNS TO POSSESS OR DISCHARGE A FIREARM ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

AND

L.D. 525—AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN MAINE CITIZENS' SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS BY ALLOWING THE DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS ON PRIVATE PROPERTY THAT IS WITHIN 500 FEET OF SCHOOL PROPERTY IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES

May 7, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, I am Eileen King, the Deputy Executive Director for Maine School Management Association, testifying on behalf of the legislative committees of the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association in opposition to L.D. 885 and L.D. 525. Both proposed bills present significant risks to the safety of our students, school staff, and communities. Allowing firearms on or near school property in these ways would undermine the critical work that schools do to keep students safe and create an environment conducive to learning.

L.D. 885 proposes that individuals with a concealed carry permit be allowed to possess and discharge firearms on school property. While the intent behind this bill may be to provide security, the reality is that introducing more firearms into our schools does not make our students safer, as it opens the door to increased risk of violence or accidental discharge. Schools are places of learning and safety, and we must ensure that they remain free from the potential dangers of firearms.

L.D. 525 seeks to allow the discharge of firearms within 500 feet of school property in certain circumstances. This proposal significantly undermines the critical work schools do in creating safe, nurturing environments for students to learn. Even if the intent of this bill is tied to defending premises, the presence of gunfire in the vicinity of a school can cause serious harm and panic among students and staff. The sounds of gunshots can induce fear, disrupt the learning environment, and cause psychological trauma, particularly in the wake of national tragedies related to school shootings.

Allowing concealed weapons on school property would create confusion for staff and law enforcement, who would be unable to distinguish between those legally carrying firearms and those with malicious intent. This could lead to dangerous confrontations and heightened anxiety among both students and staff, impeding the positive, focused learning environment that schools strive to maintain.

The presence of firearms in schools has also been shown to increase the risk of violence rather than reduce it. In times of crisis, the presence of additional weapons can escalate a situation, making it more difficult for law enforcement to respond effectively. We must prioritize strategies that improve school safety through de-

escalation techniques and mental health support, not through the introduction of more weapons into these environments.

Both bills propose changes that could compromise the safety of our schools, the well-being of our students, and the effectiveness of the educators who work tirelessly to foster safe learning environments. We urge you to consider the potential consequences and to reject these bills. Our schools must remain sanctuaries for learning, free from the risks associated with firearms.

Resources:

1. **Studies on Firearms and School Safety:** Research shows that the introduction of firearms into schools increases the risk of accidents, violence, and intimidation. For example, a study by the *National Education Association* suggests that even the perception of weapons in school can contribute to a less secure environment, creating an atmosphere of fear. (National Education Association, *The Impact of Guns on School Safety*).
2. **Psychological Impact of Gunfire Near Schools:** Psychological research has demonstrated that exposure to gun violence, even indirectly through sound, can cause severe emotional and mental stress for students. This can result in increased anxiety, panic attacks, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which disrupts learning and creates lasting trauma. (American Psychological Association, *Gun Violence and Its Effects on Children*).
3. **Law Enforcement Confusion:** According to law enforcement experts, increased numbers of firearms in public spaces make it harder for officers to differentiate between law-abiding citizens and potential threats, raising the likelihood of dangerous confrontations during emergency responses. (FBI, *Firearm Laws and Public Safety*).