



Maine Education Association

Jesse Hargrove President | Beth French Vice President | Jaye Rich Treasurer
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Testimony

In Opposition

LD 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

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

Jesse Hargrove, President, Maine Education Association

Before

May 7th, 2025

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jesse Hargrove, I am a high school social studies teacher on leave to serve as Maine Education Association President. The MEA represents nearly 24,000 educators. Our members include teachers and other educators in nearly every public school in the state, full-time faculty and other professional and support staff in both the University of Maine and Community College systems, and thousands of retired educators.

I offer this testimony today on behalf of the MEA in **OPPOSITION** to LD 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* and LD 885 *An Act to Allow Certain Persons with a Permit to Carry Concealed Handguns to Possess or Discharge a Firearm on School Property*. Both bills are solutions looking for a problem and increasing the risk of harm done to students, school staff, and community members.

LD 525 would allow discharge of firearms within 500 feet of a school. Maine is full of small community schools, where playgrounds and sporting fields provide an opportunity for kids to enjoy the outdoors. Students should enjoy recess, safe from errant bullets while playing kickball, tag, or jump rope. They should be able to practice high jump technique for a weekend meet or get batting reps in ahead of a game, without fear. Additionally, properties near schools are often desirable locations for families, allowing for an easy walk to school or off-hour grounds access. Schools are supposed to be safe spaces for kids and the community to enjoy. While the bill purports the measure will allow gun owners to defend their property, a Harvard analysis concluded that most claims of gun use for self-defense were unlawful uses that escalated argumentsⁱ. This puts our kids further at risk.

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Furthermore, LD 885 allows firearms on school premises. This is highly concerning. Schools are already understaffed, with many needing training in de-escalation, classroom management, and pedagogy. Schools are ill-equipped to determine who is a permit holder. Being a permit holder does not ensure that a person is trained as authorized law enforcement officers to handle a situation in which a weapon may be used. Under no circumstances should an untrained civilian be discharging a firearm on school grounds.

I'm also concerned about the increasingly hostile and aggressive behavior at sporting events and school committee meetings. Our student athletes, parents, and civic boards do not need flaring tempers coupled with deadly weapons. As previously stated, firearms have been used more often to escalate situations, than in self-defense. Only negatives come from incorporating more firearms in these community events. Please keep guns out of and away from our schools.

ⁱ Harvard Injury Control Research Center, *Gun Threats and Self-Defense*, Harvard T.H.Chan School of Public Health, <https://hsph.harvard.edu/research/injury-control/firearms-research/gun-threats-and-self-defense-gun-use/> accessed May 6, 2025