

Brownie Carson
Harpwell
LD 1378

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee. I am Brownie Carson, and I live in Harpswell, I submit testimony today in support of LD 1378, An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.

There was a recent story on public radio about the impact of the Columbine shooting upon the students who survived. That shooting happened more than twenty five year ago, but still evokes strong emotions today—because of the senseless loss of young lives. The story was a conversation between a survivor and her thirteen-year-old daughter.

The survivor had been reluctant to tell her young daughter about the experience, but finally did. A few days later, as they arrived at the youngster's school, she asked her mom, "That is not going to happen to me, is it?"

As we discuss enacting a red flag law in Maine, it is important that we remember that every shooting death in every setting leaves a lasting human toll on family, friends, and the community. Red flag laws cannot prevent all gunshot deaths, to be sure. But, if we can prevent even one, then we help protect our families and communities.

In some cases, such as the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in 2018, when seventeen people were killed by gun fire, the shooter showed clear signs that he posed an immediate and present danger of causing bodily injury to students at the school. "I am going to be a professional school shooter" were his words posted on the internet several months before the tragedy. He actually used his name in that post. Could a Florida red flag law have prevented those deaths? A strong case can be made that it could have.

In Maryland, authorities granted more than 300 petitions to temporarily disarm individuals in the three months after that state's law went into effect. Of those individuals, 148 lost access to their firearms temporarily. Montgomery County Sheriff Popkin said the cases included four significant threats of school shootings, and that a majority of the people who were subjects of the orders were suffering from mental health crises.

Red flag laws have also been used to bar access to guns by those threatening to hurt themselves. Connecticut's law has prevented over 70 suicides in 25 years, according to one study. There is strong evidence that red flag laws save lives. LD 1378 is designed to serve that purpose. It would help Maine's law enforcement community prevent a school shooting. It could help a family member intervene to prevent the loss of a loved one in the depths of mental illness.

For those of us who have lost a loved one or friend in a way that might have been prevented, we wish that we could go back, that we could somehow have safeguarded that person. LD 1378 is a tool that would help us safeguard our families and our communities. Thank you.

Brownie Carson, 68 Fire House Road, Harpswell, Me. 04079