

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH

In Support of LD 1378

An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order

Before the Judiciary Committee, June 11, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Lani Graham. I am from Freeport and am in support of LD 1378 as a public health expert and as a physician. This bill takes a very important step toward reducing the chances of gun violence as well as empowering families to help their loved ones in times of great stress.

The value of this bill seems straight forward. I can't imagine why we wouldn't use every avenue to keep guns out of the hands of people who may pose a significant risk to themselves or others.

The harm posed when people who should not have guns but are in some kind of crisis, is particularly evident in mass shootings. These tragic events might be prevented with a stronger, more comprehensive effort to keep firearms out of the hands of people in crisis. who should not have guns from getting them. Perhaps more significantly, in at least 53 percent of mass shootings between 2009 and 2020, the perpetrator shot a current or former intimate partner or family member. When we focus just on domestic violence nationally, without consideration for whether the shooter was prohibited from having a gun, those shootings resulted in at least 632 people shot and killed and 106 people wounded, amounting to almost half of all mass shooting deaths and one in ten injuries.¹

In addition to experiencing a horrific mass shooting, like other states Maine has a serious problem with domestic violence, and a recent report indicated that 43% of homicides in Maine were linked to domestic violence.²

But of course, most firearms deaths in Maine are suicides. And unfortunately, Maine has a high rate of suicide compared to the national average.³ We in Maine should be acutely aware of the dangers of firearm ownership by people who should not have access to this highly successful method of killing yourself. Suicide is usually an impulse which, if survived, is not repeated. Nine out of ten people who survive a suicide

¹ <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/mass-shootings-in-america/#many-mass-shooters-were-prohibited-from-possessing-firearms>

² <https://www.themainemonitor.org/domestic-abuse-linked-to-43-percent-of-maine-homicides-in-2018-19/>

³ <https://www.pressherald.com/2022/06/08/gun-suicides-in-maine-far-outpace-u-s-rate/>

attempt do not successfully commit suicide later.⁴ While attempting suicide with a firearm is not the most common method, it is usually successful when used.⁵

While Maine does have a current Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO), known as a “yellow flag law”, most experts agree that Maine could do better. Our current law requires a finding of “mental illness” which law enforcement is not capable of determining. This has been solved by a complicated trip for an assessment. That on-going requirement is serious barrier for the fast action, offers no benefits for the individual being assessed, and threatens the relationship that a person might have with health care. Families who know those close to them best, must have the ability to move quickly when help is needed. There are 21 other states that have good laws to address Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO). The State of Colorado has one of the best ERPO laws,⁶ and 4 years of experience with that law showing that it works well.⁷ But every other New England state except New Hampshire has a strong ERPO law that doesn’t depend on a medical professional. Even Indiana and Colorado, both considered strong hunting states, have good ERPO laws.

I hope you will give full support to this excellent bill.

⁴ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/survival/>

⁵ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/case-fatality/>

⁶ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1177>

⁷ <https://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-021-00353-7>