



March 6, 2023

**Testimony in Support of LD 405 An Act to Prevent False Reporting Leading to
Evacuation, Shutdown or Lockdown**

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Lynn Ellis. I live in Brunswick and I am the Legislative Director for the Maine Gun Safety Coalition. We are a grassroots organization founded over 20 years ago with a focus on education and advocacy regarding firearm related tragedies in Maine. We raise awareness about gun violence, specifically related to domestic violence, suicide and safe storage. We advocate for gun safety legislation that addresses the increase in gun violence in our state and in our country.

I am a retired social worker and wanted to speak today to thank Sen. Carney for bringing this bill to your committee. As we look ahead to dozens of bills related to firearms coming before this committee it is important to recognize the trauma of gun violence that is impacting our students. Common sense solutions pave a pathway to reducing harm in our schools and our communities. This bill is one such effort.

Here in Maine, we are so fortunate not to have had a school shooting. However, last November we experienced the unfortunate incident known as "swatting." Thankfully, there was not an active shooter in any of the schools but the response was very, very real for the students, teachers, administrators and law enforcement who responded. In a recent *Psychology Today* article Doctor Enrile talks about the Invisible Wounds children feel when they experience a lockdown, even if there is no active violence. These wounds are immediate, urgent, and often both physical and emotional. The fear and anxiety last well beyond when the "all clear" is given.

In addition to disruption to learning, our valued school staff, educators and students experienced a loss of security. "Maine's children and adolescents

are experiencing unprecedented levels of anxiety and depression, alongside youth across the nation,” says Dr. Laura Blaisdell MD/MPH, President of the MAAP. “Threats to school communities vital to our children’s lives only further stress their well-being and we critically need enhanced resources to provide mental health care that our children require.”

Maine has not yet had a school shooting, but Tuesday’s hoax was a terrible reminder that our children and communities are not immune. We must take steps now to prevent any such tragedy from happening in the future. “We call on our governor and legislators to enact common sense gun safety laws to keep our children safe.” says Cam Shannon, Chair of MGSC.

School violence remains a reality that schools, communities, and families will have to continue to face. However, engaging in trauma-informed practices can help the healing process, especially when safety plans are developed and other strategic decisions are made. Most importantly, the voices of students themselves should be expressed, listened to, and included in how solutions are created. After all, they, along with their teachers, administrators, and school staff, are right at the epicenter.

I urge you to pass LD 405 and other bills that come before you that provide solutions to the ongoing public health crisis of gun violence.

Psychology Today After the Lockdown: Learning From Students' Experiences October 18, 2022 Author: Annalisa Enrile, PhD. Clinical Professor at USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work.