



Testimony for LD 405

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

My name is Cam Shannon. I live in Yarmouth. I am the mother of three children. I am the board chair of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition. I am also a nursing student. I am here today in support of LD 405: An Act to Prevent False Reporting Leading to Evacuation, Shutdown or Lockdown.

School shootings are unbearable tragedies. Unsurprisingly the mere threat of one sparks terror in Maine children, parents, and teachers. This bill, if made law, will prevent unnecessary psychological trauma for Maine kids, teachers, and parents. It will also prevent costly (and also unnecessary) organizational and psychological demands placed on first responders.

On Tuesday November 15, 2022, 911 dispatchers received false reports of school shootings in multiple schools in Maine. The schools went into lockdown. Police rushed to the scene. Parents and children exchanged fearful, anguished texts. Students watched armed officers march through their schools to assess the veracity of the threat. Hospitals prepared to treat victims.

This very day I was working in a southern Maine hospital as part of my nursing program. I remember entering a medical supply room. A nurse was collapsed crying, surrounded by other nurses. Her colleagues had rushed to her aid and were offering to check on her patients and assume the duties she would have otherwise carried out. My instructor and I quickly left the room to give the woman space to recover from whatever terrible news she had received. We had no idea at the time that her children attended the Sanford schools. She had heard about the lockdown and feared for the worse. Later in the morning, I learned more about what was happening around the state when I received an email from my own children's superintendent in Yarmouth. He shared that there had been swatting incidents around Maine. He assured parents that the reports of school shootings were nothing but a hoax. My children – all of our children – were safe. But I found myself asking: were our children indeed safe?

While no shots were fired, I considered the psychological cost of imagined shots, lockdowns, and terrified texts. At a time when rates of teen anxiety and depression are skyrocketing, how could such an incident not linger in their young minds? Would our children and their teachers feel safe in their schools from now on? No matter our children's resiliency, this swatting event was too much for such young Mainers to bear, particularly when a reasonable remedy like LD 405 is available.