

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH

IN SUPPORT OF LD 22

An Act to Impede the Transfer of Firearms to Prohibited Persons

Presented by Senator Anne Carney

Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, April 3, 2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Lani Graham. I am a former Chief Public health Officer for Maine. I serve on the Public Health Committee of the Maine Medical Association. I live in Freeport.

The value of this bill seems straight forward. As you have heard, it comes as a recommendation from the Deadly Force Review panel. I can't imagine why we wouldn't use every avenue to keep guns out of the hands of people who should not have them.

The harm posed when people who should not have guns but get them, is particularly evident in mass shootings, where one in three incidents involved shooters that were legally prohibited from possessing firearms at the time of the shooting. These shootings resulted in 364 deaths and 125 injuries, or one in four deaths and one in 10 injuries. These tragic events might have been prevented with a stronger, more comprehensive effort to prevent those 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

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

While Maine has escaped most mass shootings, like other states we have 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. 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 attempt do not successfully commit suicide later.³ While attempting suicide with a firearm is not the most common method, it is usually successful when used.⁴

For all these reasons, I hope that you will support LD 22 unanimously.

Thank you for your attention. I would be glad to answer any questions you might have.

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

³ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/survival/>

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