

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

Good afternoon. My name is Barbara Arsenault and I am from Mexico, Maine. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on LD 60.

I live in a gun owning home and I respect the second amendment and responsible gun ownership.

My focus today is to look at the 72 hour wait period and how it can relate to firearm suicide. When South Dakota repealed its two day waiting period law in 2009, the next year it had a 7.6 percent increase in gun suicides. As a long time advocate for veterans I do want to address veteran suicide. The VA publishes statistics on veteran suicide for each state with a 2 year lag time and usually comes out each fall. In Maine thirty five veterans died in 2019 and 38 in 2020. Firearms were the lethal means 71.1% of the time. As the state of Maine is number 5 with the highest percentage of veterans this is not just a veterans issue, it is a community issue. A recent Defense Department Committee recommended a 7 day waiting period to help protect military personnel and veterans. A committee member noted that the idea is to "slow down that access to firearms so that people can survive periods of high risk"

A member of our extended family fatally shot herself in the parking lot of a gun shop in Virginia several years ago. She first attempted suicide in Chicago. She told a relative she would have bought a gun there but there was a waiting period. The relative continued to tell me that her family brought her home to Virginia. She had been institutionalized. Had there been a simple waiting period or an Extreme Risk Protection Order she would not have been able to buy a gun that day. In Virginia they have neither. This young lady was 25 and had a Masters from Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. She loved people and loved to tell their stories. To honor her memory I am telling her story and asking you to support the 72 hour wait to purchase a firearm.

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