

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 60: An Act to Require a 72-hour Waiting Period After the Sale of a Firearm

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
April 3rd, 2023

As the state's largest grassroots mental health advocacy organization, NAMI Maine supports the passage of LD 60 *An Act to Require a 72-hour Waiting Period After the Sale of a Firearm*. NAMI Maine works closely with the Maine CDC, Maine Suicide Prevention Program (MSSP) and partners to support suicide prevention for many populations. We also provide resources, guidance, and support after a suicide death across the state of Maine.

Maine has the highest rates of suicide in the Northeast. We lose a Maine citizen to suicide every 36 hours, and suicide deaths occur at more than 12 times the rate of homicide deaths in Maine. Firearms are used in more than half the suicide deaths in our state, with the percentage of firearms increasing for high risk populations, such as veterans, first responders, and in more rural locations. The most recent statistics report that 86% of firearm deaths in Maine are attributed to suicide deaths. Restricting access to lethal means during times of crisis is a critical component to suicide prevention.

During times of crisis, individuals will experience expected responses in the brain and the body. Heightened or state of crisis negatively impacts the ability to process information, control impulses, engage in problem solving, and communicate effectively, among other concerns. By requiring a 72-hour waiting period from the time that a firearm is purchased to receiving the weapon, the brain has the ability to begin to engage in critical thought and begin to return baseline levels of functioning. Research has indicated that although waiting periods have no significant impact on homicide rates, it has an impact on the firearm related suicide deaths by 2-5%. There were 132 firearm related deaths in 2021 in the state of Maine. By this calculation, this would mean that 3-7 lives would have been saved by implementing a waiting period during that year.

Suicide is an incredibly complex public health emergency. No single action will prevent suicide deaths in our state. However, a 72-hour waiting period will help to save the lives of some individuals and provide the ability for hope to return.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.

LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

Hannah Longley, LCSW, Director of Community Programs
(207) 622-5767 ○ HannahL@namimaine.org

POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA

www.namimaine.org/advocacy