

April 3, 2023

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

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

My name is Polly Haight Frawley and I live in Cumberland. This testimony is submitted in favor of the above referenced bill. Based upon the facts, WE KNOW that the imposition of a 72 hour- waiting period after the purchase of a firearm will lessen the number of suicides by firearm and save the lives of Maine residents. First, WE KNOW that suicide is an impulsive act. I refer you to a set of studies pulled together by Means Matter at the T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard that focuses on reducing the number suicides. One study examined the duration of suicidal deliberation by interviewing survivors. When asked "How much time passed between the time you decided to complete suicide and when you actually attempted suicide?"

- 24% said less than 5 minutes ▪ 24% said 5-19 minutes
- 23% said 20 minutes to 1 hour ▪ 16% said 2-8 hours
- 13% said 1 or more days

A tool that lessens the risk associated with the impulsive act to commit suicide by firearm simply by delaying access to the firearm ought to be utilized. By creating a larger, longer window between the time an individual set his or her mind to committing suicide and the actual attempt, the more likely the ideation will pass. In addition, WE KNOW that the creation of waiting periods lessen the rates of suicide by firearm. The American Academy of Pediatrics reported:

"Waiting period laws have proven to lower the rates of suicide. States with such laws had 51% fewer firearm suicides than states without. Another study showed that these states also experienced a 17% decrease in gun homicides."

Finally, WE KNOW that suicide by firearm is a significant problem in Maine. And the problem is growing. The Maine CDC reported that in 2021, as compared to 2020, suicides by firearms went up almost 20%, from 132 deaths to 158. Thanks to your leadership, in 2022 Maine invested \$230 million in efforts to prevent suicides by firearm. I urge you to embrace that effort and not work in opposition to it. I urge you to support LD 60 to impose a 72 hour waiting period upon purchasing a firearm. For those who are experiencing a mental health crisis or love someone who is, this measure could literally be life-line. Thank you for listening and for your work. These are very tough times.

Polly Haight Frawley
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<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/duration/>

<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/state-advocacy/waiting-periods-for-firearms-purchases>