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Testimony in Support of LD 168:
An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of
Firearms

Good afternoon, Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Janice Vance and I live in Kennebunk. I am a member of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition, which raises awareness about the effects of gun violence. I want to urge you to pass LD 168.

We often hear about the right of “law-abiding citizens” to own firearms. Law-abiding citizens have nothing to hide and are perfectly okay with having their status verified when purchasing. I’d like to talk about those who AREN’T law-abiding, those who could never pass a background check, but nonetheless are now able to purchase firearms.

Such people purchase online, from ads in Uncle Henry’s, at gun shows, and through word of mouth. They use them to commit crimes. Or they sell them, at a profit, to other people who intend to commit crimes. About 80% of firearms used in crimes are obtained from private sellers who don’t run background checks. And because Maine doesn’t have universal background checks, firearms purchased here are used in other states that do have background checks. There’s a reason the Maine Turnpike is also called the “Iron Pipeline.” So our lax laws negatively the safety of innocent people outside our borders.

People who can’t pass a background check also buy firearms privately and use them to murder their ex-wives, bosses or other people they’re angry at. Or to kill themselves.

Per Justice Clarence Thomas, the Second Amendment extends only to “law-abiding, responsible citizens.” Universal background checks ensure that the vast majority of firearms purchasers fit that profile. The vast majority of Mainers support universal background checks, because they know that such laws make everyone safer. Please pass LD 168.