

**April 3, 2023**  
**Peter Fromuth, Yarmouth**

Chairs Beebe Center and Salisbury, Members of the Committee, I testify today in support of LD 168, strengthening criminal background checks of gun purchasers.

The DEA reports that Maine has become a destination state where criminals come to make private gun purchases. Given the Maine statutes specifically designed to keep gun from criminals, the DEA finding is a stark example of a public policy goal defeated.

These prohibited purchasers include at least a half dozen groups:

- Criminal fugitives.

- Convicted felons.

- Individuals deemed dangerous to themselves or others.

- Persons convicted of violent misdemeanors.

- Individuals convicted of domestic abuse, and

- People subject to a restraining order.

We ban purchases by all these groups, yet here they come to get their guns. Unlike Massachusetts and other states that require private sale purchasers to pass background checks, Maine does not. By not requiring private gun buyers to submit to background checks, Maine allows many of them to hide the very records that should disqualify them. It seems an unintended contradiction: on one hand we prohibit dangerous persons from buying guns, while with the other hand we withhold a key tool to enforce that prohibition.

Gun crime statistics about male-on-female violence are one example of this policy's result. As a state Maine has the 9<sup>th</sup> highest number of cases

of men murdering women; fifteen percent of Maine women report intimate partner violence; and 50% of all homicides here are in fact the result of domestic violence. We're part of a national story: 2/3 of domestic partner homicides country-wide involved a gun, indeed a gun's presence caused a five-fold increase in homicide risk.

When we know about other - - often smaller - - degrees of risk, we act. We buy fire insurance and car insurance, sometimes flood insurance, the government monitors wildfire risk, it employs meteorologists to warn about extreme weather and reduce potential harm.

Yet when a felon or fugitive or abuser buys a gun privately, we choose not to know. This is like laying off the weatherman before hurricane season. The first step to stopping danger is choosing to know where it exists.

Let's choose to know when the wrong person tries to buy a gun. Please pass LD 168.