

Testimony to the Maine Legislature in support of LD 168 4/3/2023

Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

My name is Jan Chapman and I live in Cape Elizabeth.

Others today will speak about data and statistics that indicate passage of this bill will save lives. I want to tell you about my husband's best friend who took his own life with a firearm. My husband's best friend from college days was a talented, well-educated individual who over time developed a substance use disorder and mental health issues. Sadly, he did not get the treatment he needed. He would have periods of sobriety but also periods when he succumbed to substance misuse and was arrested on various charges and jailed numerous times. He became a convicted felon when, after a bitter dispute with his neighbors, he broke the windows of his neighbor's house. His anger and hostility alienated all his friends and family except for my husband who was loyal and supportive and tried to help him get housing, legal help and the medical care he needed despite his hostile and often threatening behaviors.

Being a convicted felon, he was not permitted to have a firearm but was able to obtain one easily from Uncle Henry's where a background check was not required. We were both concerned he would harm himself because he had threatened suicide, loaded gun in hand, on several occasions. But I was terrified he would accidentally shoot my husband when he was on substances, in pain, desperate and out of control.

After years of spiraling downward, he took his own life with a firearm which should not have been in his possession. My husband discovered his body and is haunted by the thoughts of what more he could have done to help his friend. This tragic and painful experience has made us passionate about gun safety. We need laws to prevent people who are convicted felons from obtaining firearms so easily. I urge your support of LD 168, An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms. It will save the lives of Maine people.

Thank you.