



**Testimony in Opposition to LD 52, LD 518 and LD 1557**

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

My name is Lynn Ellis and I serve as the Legislative Director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition and today I speak to you on behalf of our organization. We began over 20 years ago with the focus of protecting Mainers from gun-related tragedies. We've worked on common sense gun safety legislation for all these years. With the introduction of the bills before you today I suggest we do a 180 degree turn in our thinking. Putting more firearms into schools or allowing concealed carry among staff and students is not just a bad idea it is outright dangerous.

We believe that only cultural change will free America (and Maine) from its gun problem. We've watched for years the animosity between the gun rights folks and the gun safety activists.

The common denominator is that this stand off is not creating solutions such as common-sense legislation based on evidenced based research to address the issue. Our hope is that something more foundational, and more important to all of us is finding solutions -- to save lives

Perhaps the ongoing rise in deaths are a predictable outcome of a lack of political will to make a change and dig deeper into the divide among us. We owe to our children, and ourselves to pass laws that make things better for our citizens; a sense of wellbeing and not create more fear.

We were heartbroken last week when a mass shooting incident came to our state. We grieve for the lives lost and for those injured. They, and their families' lives are forever changed. We are forever motivated to find solutions in honor of all those who lose their lives to gun violence.

All of us must address gun violence in our state and work together to save lives. As you have heard from other testimonies today putting more firearms into the mix is not the answer. I'm not going to repeat what has already been said however, I want to share the words of students from a southern Maine high school who did policy presentations recently on gun violence. They unanimously said "Putting more guns in our schools will make us feel less safe; not more."

We urge you not to pass any of these outrageous bills that will make our schools less safe and create a foundation of fear more so than it already is.

Lynn Ellis, Legislative Director  
Maine Gun Safety Coalition