

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

Chairs Rafferty and Brennan and Education Committee Members,

I am a teacher and the mother of a teacher. I urge you to vote against LD 52, LD 518 and LD 1557. All three bills would increase the number of guns in Maine schools. Although they purport to enhance school safety, they would actually make schools less safe by increasing the likelihood that a gun could be used, purposefully or by accident, in a way that injures or kills students and/or school staff.

I was working in a Portland high school in 1999 when the shooting at Columbine High School killed 13 people and wounded 20 others. I still remember how sick I felt listening to the news reports at the time. In the nearly 25 years since then, our country has been shaken by one mass killing after another, many of them in schools. Portland was one of several school districts in Maine that went through a lockdown earlier this year when a gun threat was reported.

Arming teachers and other school staff is not the answer to our country's problem with gun violence. Rather, we must outlaw the most dangerous weapons such as assault rifles, tighten regulations about who can own a gun, require universal background checks and increase funding for mental health care.

I work in a school system with many students and adults who came to this country to escape violence in their home countries. Merely seeing weapons in a supposedly safe place like school is traumatizing to some of them. I urge you to vote down these bills, which will only make our schools more dangerous for students and staff.

**Shoshana Hoose
ESOL Teacher at Portland Adult Education**