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Senator Rafferty, Senate Chair
Representative Brennan, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and Distinguished Members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee:

LD 1557, An Act to Increase and Enhance School Safety by Allowing Individuals with Concealed Carry Permits to Possess Handguns on School Property, would allow a person with a permit to carry concealed handguns to possess a firearm on public school property or the property of an approved private school.

The Maine School Safety Center believes that there is an unnecessarily high level of risk of danger and harm to students when firearms are carried by individuals other than law enforcement. Allowing adults to carry concealed weapons in school introduces a firearm into every interaction that person has throughout the day. Further, it creates an additional level of confusion for law enforcement who may respond to the school in case of an emergency.

Both Federal law and Maine Statute prohibit the possession of firearms on school property, with some exceptions. The Gun-Free School Zones Act (GFSZA) is an act of the U.S. Congress prohibiting any unauthorized individual from knowingly possessing a loaded or unsecured firearm at a place that the individual knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, is a school zone as defined by 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(25). The law applies to public, private, and parochial elementary schools and high schools, and to non-private property within 1,000 feet (300 m) feet of them. It provides that the states and their political subdivisions may issue licenses that exempt the licensed individuals from the prohibition. This bill allows for concealed carry-on school grounds and in schools without any safeguards. Title 20-A §6552 states "A person may not possess a firearm on public school property or the property of an approved private school or discharge a firearm within 500 feet of public school property or the property of an approved private school." There are exceptions for law enforcement officers, School Resource Officers, and other specific cases in which explicit permission has been granted by the local school board with expectations for appropriate safety measures.

LD 1557 would not require the permit carrier to notify the school that they have a weapon. There are no requirements for separation of ammunition or other safe storage. There are no expectations for specialized training for permit carriers related to active shooter situations. The