

**Testimony in Opposition to LD 551 An Act to An Act to Strengthen Maine Citizens' Second Amendment Rights by Allowing the Discharge of Firearms on Private Property That Is Within 500 Feet of School Property in Certain Circumstances**

Good morning, Senator Beebe-Center, Rep. Salisbury and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee. My name is Michele Stapleton and I live in Brunswick.

I wanted to share the most recent polling on gun issues because I think it strongly suggests how legislatures should be addressing gun issues at this time.

**Fox News Poll: Voters favor gun limits over arming citizens to reduce gun violence,** <https://www.foxnews.com/official-polls/fox-news-poll-voters-favor-gun-limits-arming-citizens-reduce-gun-violence> (April 27th)

Gun violence is now a top 3 issue in the US, behind only the economy and inflation. Ahead of climate change, immigration, crime, abortion, etc.

Half of voters are extremely or very concerned that they or a loved one will be a victim of gun violence (51%). And, by very wide margins voters support focusing on specific gun safety measures; they are rejected the claim that more guns in more hands is our solution to reducing reduce gun violence.

A new Fox News Poll finds most voters favor the following proposals:

- 87% Requiring criminal background checks on all gun buyers
- 81% Improving enforcement of existing gun laws
- 81% Raising the legal age to buy a gun to 21
- 80% Requiring mental health checks on gun buyers
- 80% Allowing police to take guns from those considered a danger to themselves or others
- 77% Requiring a 30-day waiting period for all gun purchases
- 61% Ban assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons
- 52% opposed to more citizens carrying guns to defend against attackers

I wanted to share this poll because I think it's pretty clear that voters want lawmakers to focus on enacting policies aimed at preventing gun violence. Not on encouraging more gun ownership.

Ideally these policies would be evidence-based solutions backed up by research, but after the NRA pushed for the Dickey Amendment in 1997 the CDC avoided research on gun violence for twenty-plus years. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickey\\_Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dickey_Amendment). And, in fact Congress did not fund any gun research for 20+ years.

In 2020 funding for gun research was finally established again.

Research is most valuable when it can be draw from wider sources, i.e., from multiple states. With that in mind I urge you to make sure that you don't pass any legislation that unintentionally blocks access to valuable data that would otherwise support important research.

Suggestion: before the work session you reach out to people in the gun research field (Harvard or Rand or another leading researcher) to see for example, how non-registry evidence can be collected without infringing on anyone's rights. You wouldn't want LD 624, or another legislation, to block valuable research.

Thank you for your time on this very important issue.