

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Nacole Palmer. I live in Bowdoin. I stand up to oppose LD 551: Allowing the Discharge of Firearms within 500 feet of a School.

I am a mom to a toddler and a step-mom to three older children. I have been an educator for more than two decades, and I currently teach at Colby College, where a recent shooting left many, including my students, paralyzed with fear and worry for weeks. I was living in Connecticut at the time of the Sandy Hook shootings, and I learned in the days that followed the carnage there that three of the children were one degree of separation from me.

Sandy Hook is when I stopped thinking of gun violence as something that happened in far away places. That's when I not only witnessed but was part of an entire community who had come to realize that the horrific reach of gun violence can come for any person at any time, including and maybe especially in the places where people tell themselves, "that can't happen here."

I spend a lot of time thinking about our children, our schools, and how to create the kind of world our children deserve to grow up in, and I imagine that everyone here wants their communities, families, and loved ones to be safe.

This law, though, LD 551, would create more danger and more violence in the places that should be most sacred: our schools. Quite frankly, I am horrified to think that my son could have to go to school with someone doing target practice within range of a school. Seriously??!

Our children should not have to worry about being shot when they go to school, I think we can all agree on that. Enacting this bill would only increase that risk. From firearms that have ranges up to and even beyond 500 feet, to a vigilante firing a weapon first and asking questions later when a child mistakenly crosses onto their property on the way to or from school...this bill is dangerous and would impede public safety, not add to it. I ask you to vote Ought Not To Pass on LD 551.