

Good morning, Chairs Beebe-Center and Salisbury, and Members of the Committee.

My Name is Peter Fromuth, I'm a parent, attorney, and resident of Yarmouth. I speak today in opposition to L.D. 551, a bill that would amend current law to allow discharge of a firearm in self-defense or to protect the residence of a person residing on private property within 500' of school property.

This bill is so flawed that there is only time to unpack a couple of issues.

Start with self-defense. Maine law qualifies the right of self-defense with the **duty to retreat** unless the encounter occurs inside one's dwelling place. Yet even there our law still requires a **reasonable belief** that deadly force is necessary to prevent infliction of bodily injury. L.D. 551 removes both duties. It allows deadly force outside the home without the duty to retreat and inside the home without the reasonable belief precaution. Because these duties do apply to all other Maine residents, the bill asks us to accept the absurd premise that the presence of children justifies faster resort to firing a gun.

Let's also look at range. Current law says that you cannot discharge a weapon within 500' of a school. That exclusionary zone is welcome, but it offers children better protection against handguns, which typically have much shorter range than long guns. America's best-selling rifle, the AR15, typically has an effective range 2, 3 or more times greater than 500'. So, while there is a risk now of stray bullets crossing Maine schoolyards or entering school buildings, that risk is reduced by the 500' exclusionary zone. If we make it easier to fire a gun within 500 feet as this bill would do, the existing stray bullet risk will increase.

Now, what about mistaken identity. Sent to collect siblings from a Kansas City birthday party, 16-year Ralph Yarl knocked on the wrong door in April and got shot in the head by a resident in self-defense. Later a girl got shot and killed for turning into the wrong driveway. And still later 3 girls were fired upon for approaching the wrong car. Then last Wednesday a Texas weatherman threatened a 6-year-old girl for approaching his door searching for her kitten.

People here make mistakes too, but our law requires you to think before you shoot. Don't suspend that requirement around schools, don't turn them into hair-trigger zones. Oppose this dangerous bill.