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*Testimony of Representative Melanie Sachs, sponsor of*  
**LD 1340, An Act to Prohibit the Sale or Possession of Rapid-fire Modification Devices**  
*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety*

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Melanie Sachs and I am honored to represent the community of Freeport in the Maine Legislature. I am pleased to sponsor **LD 1340, An Act to Prohibit the Sale or Possession of Rapid-fire Modification Devices**.

Please note that I have a small, friendly amendment to the bill, which reflects the ever-changing scope of this problem (which we will dig into next). The first is to add the term “auto sear” which is a device description being utilized more frequently, including as a term in pending federal legislation. The definition of “rapid-fire device” is clarified as well. This amendment may be found at the end of my testimony.

Maine law generally prohibits possession of machine guns, unless the possession complies with all federal requirements (see 17-A MRSA 1051, 1052). In an effort to mimic fully-automatic (i.e. machine gun) fire, manufacturers and even private citizens have created a wide range of “rapid-fire devices,” which significantly increase the rate of fire of semi-automatic firearms- which, by design, is meant to fire only one round of ammunition for each pull of the trigger. These devices allow shooters to approximate machine gun fire with semi-automatic firearms. These devices are widely available and can be obtained without any of the additional steps and safeguards required to obtain a machine gun.

These rapid-fire devices significantly increase the lethality and dangerousness of semi-automatic weapons. As one CBS news story noted, these “conversion devices are small and inexpensive. They cost as little as \$20 but can change a handgun to fire 15 rounds in under two seconds. And these modified weapons are becoming more common,” with “the locally made switches...being sold on social media apps, including Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram.”

However, these “small and inexpensive devices” have a huge, negative impact on our law enforcement partners.

“These things fire faster than what the military is carrying,” said Jeffrey Boshek, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, Explosives (ATF) Dallas Field Division. “That's how fast these switches are making these handguns. It's a real problem.”

DC Metropolitan Police Chief Robert Contee, who is leaving the department to join the FBI, stated that “It's something that's on my mind every day, while we're sitting here... You take one person with one firearm that's capable of shooting 100 rounds of ammunition very rapidly in a short period of time. That can happen anywhere at any time. And we see these ... converter switches that are able to convert semi-automatic firearms into fully automatic firearms; those are the things that keep me up at night.”

When I discussed these devices with one local law enforcement partner, he noted that “Personally, other than an individual saying ‘I have one and you don't’, I don't see the need for any device that makes a semi-automatic rifle a fully automatic firearm or a machine gun. Bragging rights.”

This bill does not attempt to classify these devices as machine guns, which was a policy put forward by former President Trump and which remains mired in the courts. This bill aligns directly with the efforts of fourteen other states and the District of Columbia. These include states such as Florida, Nevada, Virginia, New York and Washington state, as well as our New England neighbors Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, with some not only banning these devices, but also assault weapons. These states vary in the strength of their gun safety laws but are aligned on this issue of banning these harmful devices.

I have heard quite often, as this committee has, that the Maine Legislature cannot pass sensible gun safety measures due to the interpretation that the Maine Constitution and the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution somehow prohibit the regulation of guns. I am moved to cite the work of celebrated Maine historian Heather Cox Richardson, who wrote just yesterday after yet another mass-shooting in the U.S. that “the nation’s current gun free-for-all is not traditional but, rather, is a symptom of the takeover of our nation by a radical extremist minority,” and that “the idea that massacres are ‘the price of freedom,’ is new, and it is about politics, not our history.”

However, even if these arguments are offered here today by opponents of this bill, they simply do not apply. This bill is concerned with accessory devices, not the firearms themselves. Per David Pucino, Deputy Chief Counsel of the Giffords Law Center, there have been no cases striking down rapid-fire modification devices, and as noted above, is an option many states have utilized without Second Amendment challenges.

This bill is supported by a wide coalition of law enforcement partners, public health professionals and even gun owning families like mine. Yes, I said like mine. This bill does not impact Maine heritage traditions, like families who hunt for food, as my family did growing up, or respectful gun safety instruction, which was part of my children’s Scouting experience. My son is now an Eagle Scout and my daughter a Gold, Silver and Bronze award winning Girl Scout; as an award-winning Scout Leader myself, I know that this bill only makes Maine safer, without infringing on anyone’s rights. It may impact their wants, but not their rights.

I have had heard from many constituents, both gun owners and non-gun owners alike, who have asked me repeatedly to do SOMETHING about the gun violence plaguing our country and our state. Here is one email I received from a Freeport mom just a few days ago, after the massacre in Bowdoin, Maine.

*"On Tuesday 4/18, I received an email notifying me that my children's daycare was on lockdown because there was a shooter in the area. My children are 9 months old and 3 years old. I instantly called my husband, read the email and just cried. It completely shook me to know that my whole world, everything I live for, was at risk.*

*This event hit too close to home and I feel the need to speak out and urge you to push legislation now, talk about it now!*

*.... I am married to a hunter, and have family that hunt for deer and moose. They all agree and support this request. Anything to protect our children. Please do the right thing for our community. A couple years ago, I waited in the car while my husband went into a gun store in Maine to purchase a rifle for hunting. It took him 10 minutes!!!! That is NOT ok. It takes me longer to wait for my order at a fast food joint. Please help protect our children before it's too late!"*

Another Freeport mom emailed me this morning. She said "Please tell them we are begging them to do something. I was at a school lock down drill last month and it broke my heart. "

We do not have to live like this. We can support sensible safety measures. Please support LD 1340.

### **Proposed amended language:**

§ 1060

1.

A. "Auto sear" means a device that prevents the trigger bar from limiting a semi-automatic firearm to firing only one round each time the trigger is pulled.

...

E. "Rapid-fire modification device" means a device that is designed to accelerate the rate of fire of a semi-automatic firearm, including but not limited to an auto sear, binary trigger system, bump stock device, burst trigger system, or trigger crank. ~~or any other device that is designed to accelerate the rate of fire of a semi-automatic firearm.~~