

Testimony in support of LD 2237, Health & Human Services, 3/3/24

Chairs Meyer and Baldacci, Representative Javner, Members of the Committee, I am Mark Segar, from Freeport. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of LD 2237.

What I think most important to express is gratitude. To Speaker Talbot-Ross for her leadership. President Jackson as well.

To Freeport's Representative Sachs and Senator Daughtry, and the many other sponsors of this effort to develop and extend services, both preventive and responsive programs, to address mental health needs, community awareness, understanding, and capacity to cope with traumatic events.

My wife and I have devoted our professional lives in service to children, youth, and families, in Massachusetts, in New Hampshire, and - since 1993 - in Maine. In our teaching, counseling, advocacy, and school administration, we have witnessed many acts of intervention by devoted professionals - brave police officers, steadfast social workers, dedicated teachers and coaches, nurses, skilled physicians (and compassionate citizens as well ) that have protected vulnerable children and adults, provided safe harbor, prevented violence, in caring communities all across New England.

But we have also seen too many lives damaged or destroyed, childhoods shattered, parents left grieving, households and communities in despair, due to lack of prevention services, inadequate gun safety measures, insufficient training and mental health resources, procedures to interrupt cycles of violence.

This legislation by itself is not a complete solution, but it is a very important part of the framework Maine must have to protect and nourish individuals and communities alike.

It includes a number of valuable proposals:

- expanded mental health crisis response services
- Support for gun shops as partners in promoting safety and well-being
- a voluntary registry to reduce impulsive violence
- reporting mechanisms to gather information and increase awareness

- provisions for inter-agency collaboration
- materials and programs to build understanding
- and an Office of Violence Prevention

LD 2237 is a wise and timely initiative.

It recognizes hard truths.

It strengthens services.

It builds compassionate capacity.

We all have heard the phrase when leaders are sworn in to office - "to preserve, protect, and defend." This bill reflects that spirit. It deserves strong support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark W. Segar, Ed.D.

South Freeport

March 4, 2024