



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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***Testimony of Representative Margaret Craven in support of
LD 2237, An Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding
Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources
Before the Health and Human Services Committee***

Sen Baldacci, Rep. Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services committee, my name is Margaret Craven, and I represent House District 93, which is part of Lewiston.

I am proud to stand before you today in strong support of LD 2237, an Act to Strengthen Public Safety, Health and Well-being by Expanding Services and Coordinating Violence Prevention Resources.

The citizens of Lewiston and surrounding areas are still reeling from the great tragedy that happened on October 25, and if it can happen in Lewiston, it can happen anywhere. Across the nation, it has happened in our schools, our churches, our supermarkets, at concerts, in bars and more.

I am left in despair witnessing the devastation the people in my community are suffering. There is confusion, hurt, grief, loss of all kinds, anger, fear, economic stress, and lack of mental health services.

Part of the bill before you will fund mental health services. As everyone serving on this committee well knows, expanding the mobile response service will save lives. The strengthening of 911 and 988 service will also save lives.

We welcome the crisis receiving centers, especially in Lewiston, but opening centers across the state is just as important. This program has proven effective in saving lives, keeping people out of jail and helping people get resources for mental health and substance use disorder. More importantly, the person can be evaluated for their safety and the safety of others.

I feel a bit like I'm talking to the choir here, as we all have served together on this committee for over a year and have heard time and again just how critical funding for mental health services is.

This bill addresses funding waiting lists. It also has a provision to educate the public, law enforcement and medical providers about existing laws, which in turn will assist law enforcement and, hopefully, save lives in our communities.

Data collection regarding violent behavior is something that's been missing from the public health system, and this bill will create a program to secure valuable information that will help prevention efforts in the future.

I think inviting gun sellers to participate in suicide prevention is a novel idea. It seems it has been successful in other states, and I look forward to seeing Maine gun sellers follow suit to prevent suicide by firearm.

Requiring the Public Safety Commissioner to design an alert system to inform the public about an active shooter is especially important. I live a ½ mile from the bowling alley where there was an active shooter on October 25th, although I heard all the sirens, I had no idea what was going on until my family and friends started calling and texting asking where I was and to lock the door.

Life has changed, and we have to change with it.

Thank you for your attention.