

Tuesday, March 5th, 2024

LD 2086 *An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms*

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Moonan, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Diane Kew, I live in Brunswick, Maine, and I am a recently-retired high school teacher.

Over the past decade, being in lockdown became an expected occurrence, whether it was for drill purposes or a perceived threat. One particular time was more unsettling than the rest when the principal announced, "This is *not* a drill. We are in lockdown because a person with a gun has been sighted near the school."

My classroom, located on the first floor of the building, went silent as the 20-ish sophomores all looked at me. My heart and mind raced, yet I assumed as calm a demeanor as possible and started directing them in a stage whisper: "Cover the window to the hallway. Make sure the windows are locked. Pull the miniblinds down. No matter what, ***do not*** open the door. Everyone, *No Talking.*"

And then questions arose that are not covered in drills: "What if I have to go to the bathroom?" "Can I go see the nurse?" "What happens if we hear shots down the hall?"

Mostly, my responses were reasonable: "I will call the office to ask, but you need to stay in this room until I tell you otherwise," while some of them were questionable: "We will use the trashcan as our makeshift toilet." Luckily, no one chose to use it.

After nearly two hours, we were given the all-clear. "Please go to the class period that you would normally be in at this time." What? No debriefing? No chance to process what just happened as a group? No. We were to resume our schedule as though it was normal.

So this is the story you would never hear, except that I decided to tell it today. Because it's the story that doesn't make the news, yet it's the story that affects nearly every single student in this state *and* nation. It's a chilling reality that teachers now have to decide whether or not the safest option is to stay locked down or to leave the building, and they are given time during staff meetings to prepare for any situation.

As a society, we carry on as though this is normal, but it is not. *This is anything but normal.* And our students are afraid. They don't say it directly, but they are jumpy when an unexpectedly loud noise happens—not first assuming that it is a textbook dropping to the floor, but a weapon being fired. They laugh it off and joke with one another about how stupid it was to think it was something more sinister, but there it is, trapped in their heads; their right to live free of fear is gone now that we know mass shootings *in Maine* are possible.

LD 2086 is *not* about impeding law-abiding gun owners from hunting—something I support. It is about limiting the ability to turn a semi-automatic weapon into a machine gun because they are only meant to do one thing: *kill people.* And we know that banning them is effective; when the federal assault weapons ban was in effect from 1994-2004, mass shooting fatalities were 70% less likely to occur compared to the periods both before *and* after the ban.<sup>1</sup>

Please discourage the possibility of ever having another mass shooting in our state by voting "ought to pass" on LD 2086.

<sup>1</sup> Charles DiMaggio et al., "Changes in US Mass Shooting Deaths Associated with the 1994–2004 Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Analysis of Open-source Data," *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery* 86, no. 1 (2019): 11–19.