

Testimony to Judiciary Committee
In support of L.D. 2086

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Good morning. My name is Rob Levin and I live in Portland. I am a Quaker, a member of Portland Friends Meeting, and gun safety has deep spiritual resonance for me. I'd like to share with you a distilled version of a message I shared in Quaker Meeting the Sunday after the Lewiston shootings.

I have a teenage daughter at Portland High School. There were two separate gun-related false alarms in the past couple years in the Portland schools. Both times my wife and I braced ourselves for what was happening, but were quickly reassured by phone calls from our daughter sharing that she was ok, everything was fine. Even though no one had been in danger and these were hoaxes, they felt like close calls for us as parents. But she was safe. We moved on with our lives, the next work thing or social engagement.

Now I'd like to invite you to do something that may be difficult. I invite the members of the Judiciary Committee, and everyone in this room, to take a deep breath, and recall the evening of October 25 in Lewiston. Remember where you were when you first heard the news, remember what you were doing.

Next, and this might be even more difficult, but imagine if your husband and son had been out bowling that evening in Lewiston. Or your father or girlfriend was playing cornhole that evening. You're home, and you hear about what has happened. You're waiting for the phone to ring. You're calling and texting, not getting any response. In all sincerity, please try to put yourself in those family members' shoes for a moment.

Because here's the beautiful and terrible truth of it all: That *was* your husband and son. That was *your* father, *your* girlfriend, *your* grandparents. Those who lost their lives that night, they were *our* loved ones. They belong to us and we belong to them. We belong to each other. Whenever one person dies from gun violence, there is no such thing as a close call for the rest of us. It is us, you, me, and everyone in this room, who has lost a loved one.

This Legislature, this Governor, and more broadly, we Mainers as a society failed those 18 of our family members in Lewiston that night. Now we have a chance to do better. I urge this committee to pass this bill, and the slate of bills coming up on Thursday. You have an awesome opportunity here to save lives, and it will be the lives of your loved ones.