

POSITION STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

LD 2119 An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights

Presented to Maine's Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

As the leading grassroots mental health advocacy organization in our state, NAMI Maine strongly advocates for the passage of 2119: An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights. Recent data on suicide fatalities in Maine highlights a pressing concern: in 2022 alone, we mourned the loss of 270 fellow Mainers to suicide, with firearms accounting for 158 of these tragic deaths. This starkly underscores the fact that 59% of suicide fatalities in our state involve firearms.

Suicide is a preventable tragedy, and effective intervention relies on the availability of resources and support for individuals in distress. Research consistently demonstrates that individuals often recognize the risk posed by their mental health challenges. Therefore, enabling them to limit access to lethal means during their most vulnerable moments can significantly enhance safety. Studies have shown that individuals who died of suicide were 2-4 times more likely to have a lethal suicide attempt vs individuals who did not own firearms.¹ For instance, the Israel Army's implementation of mandatory firearms holds over weekends resulted in remarkable a 70% reduction in firearm suicide deaths. Providing avenues for individuals at risk for suicide to limit access to lethal means, coupled with appropriate services and support, has been unequivocally proven to save lives. Notably, over 90% of individuals who survived a suicide attempt do not die of suicide, highlighting the efficacy of interventions aimed at restricting access to lethal means, in conjunction with comprehensive support services.²

It is imperative that as this legislation progresses, considerations for mitigating liability Federal Firearms License holders and other entities are involved in providing secure firearms storage options.

This committee holds the unique position to enhance opportunities for individuals at risk to engage in safety planning and crucial conversations about mental health and suicide prevention. By enacting legislation that normalizes discussions around mental health and firearms safety planning, this committee lays the groundwork for reducing the isolation experienced by those grappling with mental health challenges.

NAMI Maine urges the committee to support 2119: An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing Voluntary Waiver of Firearms Rights. In doing so, we take significant strides toward saving lives and fostering a more supportive and resilient community for all Mainers.

ABOUT NAMI MAINE: Incorporated in 1984, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maine Chapter (NAMI Maine) is the state's largest grassroots mental health organization. With support from national and regional affiliates, the agency is dedicated to building better lives for everyone impacted by behavioral health concerns. NAMI Maine engages with leaders and community partners at all levels to improve the state's mental health system through collaboration and education.

¹ Simonetti, J. A., & Rowhani-Rahbar, A. (2019). Limiting Access to Firearms as a Suicide Prevention Strategy Among Adults. *JAMA Network Open*, 2(6), e195400. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2019.5400>

² Sung, J., & Bass, B. (2022, March 31). Suicide is Washington state's biggest gun violence problem. *Crosscut*. <https://crosscut.com/opinion/2021/08/suicide-washington-states-biggest-gun-violence-problem>

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POSITIONS & POLICY AGENDA

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