



Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights
An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms

March 5, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and Members of the Committee:

I am Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a coalition of seven mainline Protestant denominations who represent over 400 local churches in Maine with more than 50,000 parishioners in their care. I am testifying on behalf of the Council **in support of LD 2119 and LD 2086.**

Since the Lewiston shooting, the outcry from congregations in our membership has been unlike anything I've seen in my 9 years with the Council, or in my 34 years in ordained ministry. Every day we get emails and phone calls from Mainers of faith asking how they can take action to reclaim our streets, schools, and workplaces from the threat of gun violence, to reclaim the power of our voice from narrow special interests that seek to block even modest, common-sense measures to prevent gun violence like the two bills before you today.

While they are grateful for the prayers and prayer vigils that many of us have hosted, they know it's not enough, and they feel compelled to create real change and take action to demand sensible gun safety legislation that will help prevent gun violence in our state. As peacemakers called to beat swords into plowshares these church members and clergy, tested by their grief, resolute in their faith, tell us they are committed to taking action. No more excuses. No more waiting. No more empty prayers. No more silence. I stand here today on their behalf in support of the two bills before you.

Updating Maine law to include conversion devices in the definition of "machine guns" is an important first step in stopping easy access to weapons of war designed for the battlefield that enable mass shooting. Helping those in crisis by allowing them to sign themselves up for the federal do-not-sell list, and providing a waiver of liability for gun shop owners who provide safe storage of firearms for their customers is an important step in preventing suicides by putting time between an impulse and access to weapons.

Both LD 2119 and LD 2086 are among those "things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42), that could prevent another intentional act of gun violence perpetrated against innocent, beloved people created in the image of God. For these reasons, the Maine Council of Churches urges you to vote Ought To Pass.