



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0002

(207) 287-1400

TTY: MAINE RELAY 711

Laurie Osher, PhD

13 Mayo Street

Orono, ME 04473

Phone: (207) 944-6743

Laurie.Osher@legislature.maine.gov

March 5, 2024

Testimony of Representative Laurie Osher in support of
**LD 2119, An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the
Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Laurie Osher and I represent District 25, the majority of Orono. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **LD 2119, An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights**.

As you have heard, this legislation allows a person to temporarily waive their right to purchase or receive a firearm by filing a voluntary waiver of firearm rights form. The bill also ensures that a person may revoke a voluntary waiver of firearm right, should they wish to purchase firearms at a later time.

According to the CDC in 2021 over 48,000 Americans lost their lives to suicide. That's about one death every 11 minutes. That same year the CDC estimates that over 12 million American adults seriously thought about suicide and 1.7 million of those individuals attempted suicide. We also know that firearms are the most common method used in suicide and when used they almost always result in death.

I could give you more statistics as I am sure others will do today but I want to tell you a story about a young woman, a friend and a constituent who lost her life to suicide. She attended school with my sons and I had the pleasure to watch this funny, smart, young lady who could make anyone laugh succeed in school. She was active in school plays, the show choir and the debate team. She was a member of a class of Orono kids that welcomed newcomers, supported one-another and spontaneously burst into song on bus rides for school activities and when waiting for the program at the Challenger

Learning Center to begin. It seemed that the future of this young women was a bright one but no.

After high school, she became depressed. She came home from college after a semester. Her mental health clouded her ability to see a bright future for herself that the rest of us knew was there.

She struggled with suicidal thoughts for a few years. Last year, she felt well enough to re-enroll in college. Everyone thought that she was doing better, but we learned that her funny, seemingly happy, presentation wasn't the whole story. The challenge of re-starting college was too much and her suicidal thoughts returned. If there had been this law, allowing the voluntary waiver of firearm rights, she may have survived that very dark day in September when she went into a local gun store, purchased a gun and ammunition and then went to the shooting range behind the store and shot herself.

We will never know if she would have sought a waiver as this bill allows, but we know without such an option we are not using all the tools available to us to prevent this tragedy from repeating itself.

Allowing someone who knows that they are struggling to take positive, proactive action to protect themselves and others is a common-sense solution that we should all be able to support.

Please vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 2119.