

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, honorable and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am Judy Williams from Belfast, a member of the Gun Safety Work Group of The First Church in Belfast, and the grandmother of 11 children, many of whom attend schools where active shooter drills are a part of everyday life. For the sake of all of Maine's children living in fear of a mass shooting at their schools, I urge your support of LD 2224.

Expanding background checks to private, unadvertised sales is a good step toward making all children safer, for it closes the loophole that allows those unchecked sales, often at sites like Gunbroker.com, responsible for an estimated 18.5 million firearm sales in 2021.

Everytown for Gun Safety notes that each year, there are more than 2,000 ads on Armslist.com offering guns for sale in Maine, potentially to people prohibited from owning firearms. Background checks on these sales would not cause undue burden on responsible gun owners, as there are 910 licensed firearms dealers in Maine, spread over all of Maine's counties.

The background check loophole has caused tragedies nationwide. A 2022 Associated Press article summarized just some of the carnage caused by people who were able to get guns through unlicensed sellers:

- Seven killed in Midland, Texas, with a gun purchased in a private, person-to-person sale;
- Nine killed in just thirty seconds in Dayton, Ohio, with an AR-15-style pistol purchased online.
- Twenty-three killed in El Paso, Texas, with an AK-47 style rifle and 1,000 rounds of hollow-point ammunition bought online.

Forty-nine people whose lives might have been saved had their shooters been required to have background checks. These situations could easily happen in Maine.

This is a loophole that must be closed, so I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2224 and expand background checks in Maine.

As for the Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) part of LD 2224, I am grateful for the changes to Maine's yellow flag law suggested by Governor Mills in this bill, but disappointed that they do not include the possibility of family members or friends initiating the process for the ERPO. As the people who know the person of concern best, who perhaps are living with that person and seeing day-to-day mental health changes in him/her, family and friends are in the best position to catch early warning signs of troubling behavior and who also have knowledge of that person's gun ownership. I would urge the committee to amend LD 2224 to appropriately broaden the list of people who may initiate an ERPO.

I also have concerns about the necessity for a medical assessment of the person of concern in this bill as it stands. For an ERPO to be effective in temporarily removing firearms from a person of concern, time is of the essence. The Uvalde, Texas, killer of 21 children purchased his gun just two days before that shooting. The killer of eight in massage parlors in Atlanta purchased his gun just hours before that shooting. Waiting for a police officer to contact a judge to begin the process of finding medical personnel to complete a mental health evaluation of these individuals would not have prevented these tragedies, but perhaps streamlining the process by removing the need for the medical assessment might have. There should be an efficient process to determine the need for swift crisis intervention while protecting the individual's rights of due process and the public's right to safety. I urge you to amend the Extreme Risk Protection Order part of LD 2224 to make it more efficient and to hopefully then save lives.

I appreciate your consideration of my thoughts regarding LD 2224 and urge you to do all you can to support and strengthen this bill. Thank you.