

Governor Mills, Senator Rotundo, and Honorable Committee Members:

I am here to testify strongly in favor of LD 2224 and LD2238.

My name is Dr. George Stewart. I live in Portland. I am a physician, a retired psychiatrist and I specialized in seeing adolescents.

I also grew up with guns in the Pacific Northwest, hunting both deer and birds.

Both personally and professionally, I have known the grief of parents who have lost a child or a spouse and the grief of children who have lost a sibling or a parent.

Firearms are the #1 cause of death in teenagers 15-19yo, whether by accident, homicide, or suicide. Mass killings are the most public face of our current gun culture. And there will, undoubtedly, be more of the same in the future. However, those numbers are dwarfed by the number of successful suicides completed with guns.

As you no doubt know, Maine has the highest gun death rate in New England, mostly from completed suicide. Suicide is, of course, a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

In states with strong gun safety laws, gun violence overall, including deaths by suicide, decrease significantly.

Improved mental health services are necessary but not sufficient to address these issues. For example, the majority of mass shooters, and many others, would *never* use mental health services before completing their horrific acts.

As for assault weapons, I side with the many Sheriff and Police Associations who strongly discourage their possession by civilians.

I would urge the authors and committee members to consider strengthening the Background Check and Extreme Risk Protection Order bills, include background checks on *all* gun sales, advertised or not, public or private, as well as the ability for a concerned relative or other close associate to apply *directly* to the court, hastening an important process at a time of great danger.

I ask you to vote Ought to Pass on both bills under consideration.

I thank you for your time.

Email: georgehstewart000@gmail.com