

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

State House, Room 438

Thursday, March 7th, 2024

***Testimony in Support of LD 2224, “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine’s Firearm Laws and Mental Health System” and LD 2238, “An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases”***

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Matthew Wellington, I’m a resident of Brunswick, and I support LD 2224, “An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine’s Firearm Laws and Mental Health System” and LD 2238, “An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases.”

Gun violence tears communities apart and leaves lasting scars, both physical and emotional. For the survivors and people who lost loved ones and friends on Oct 25th, the trauma and grief are unimaginable. For everyone in Maine, the shootings rocked our sense of safety and left painful memories we won’t soon forget.

My family and I huddled in our house for days as authorities searched for the shooter. I struggled for a way to explain it all to my two year old, to help her understand why she wasn’t going to school, the library, or the playground on a beautiful fall day. I had no words to explain it, just anger and frustration. She deserves to grow up without the constant, nagging fear of gun violence every time she leaves the house.

Research shows that states with weaker gun laws have higher rates of gun violence [1], and Maine’s gun laws are among the least restrictive in the country, especially compared to other Northeastern states. The bottomline is that we have evidence based solutions to prevent gun violence.

LD 2224 and LD 2238 would take critical steps to keep our communities safe by:

- instituting background checks on all advertised, unlicensed gun sales;
- making modest changes to Maine’s yellow flag law that give law enforcement an additional tool to take someone who poses a threat to themselves or others into protective custody while they await evaluation;
- implementing a 72 waiting period to purchase firearms that would help reduce impulsive acts of violence.

While these pieces of legislation are an important starting point, legislators should consider a more effective Extreme Risk Protection Order (otherwise known as a red flag law) that gives family members and others a clear pathway through the court to temporarily remove firearms from people who pose a danger to themselves or others in the community.

I urge you to please vote LD 2224 and LD 2238 "Ought to Pass". Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matthew Wellington  
Brunswick

[1] Reeping PM, et al. State gun laws, gun ownership, and mass shootings in the US: cross sectional time series *BMJ*. 2019