

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

I am Katie Winship. I live in Belfast where I am a member of the Gun Safety Work Group of The First Church of Belfast. Today I will deliver the written testimony of another member of our group, Brian Sterner. Brian is a hunter and his views are the same as those of other hunters I know.

Brian's words:

"I am a gun owner for the purpose of home protection and hunting. I would like to express my support for further Safe Gun legislation in the state of Maine. I am not threatened in any way by further gun laws that will cut down on the use of them in cases of suicide, domestic violence and other crimes, and mass shootings. I believe that most responsible gun owners support this but have an unfounded fear of this leading to the eventual elimination of gun ownership. It is a shame that the rhetoric of fear promulgated by the gun manufacturers and groups like the NRA influences people in this way.

I support the 72-hour rule. The wait time allows people intending to purchase a gun for all the wrong reasons, additional time to think about their decision and any actions they were planning with the gun. This is especially critical in preventing suicide by gun. I support mandatory background checks for all gun purchases. This will deter the illegal purchases of guns.

I support Extreme Risk Protection Orders that limit gun possession for reasons of mental health. These laws allow removal of guns from persons whose mental state may be of danger themselves and to others.

I also support the elimination of the sale of military style semi-automatic assault weapons to the public. Although these weapons are light weight and are attractive to hunters for that reason, they serve no other purpose to the hunter and do not eliminate the ability to hunt with a different style weapon of the same caliber. When the federal ban on these weapons was in place it did not lead to the elimination of all gun ownership.

None of the above legislation hinders me as a responsible safe gun owner in purchasing and using guns for the safe purposes I have already chosen.

I lived in Pennsylvania and had a background check completed before purchasing a handgun, I had to register that handgun and I needed a permit to carry it. I was amazed when I moved to Maine, none of this was in place. I believe it should exist and I support any and all legislation to get it in place.

I realize that Maine did not have a history of mass shootings until Lewiston, but the suicide rate by guns is high. Why wait for more tragedies? Let us act now and create a path of responsible safe gun ownership.

I do not believe that any of this legislation will prevent me or any other hunter from enjoying hunting in Maine.

I am asking for your support in moving all further Safe Gun Legislation forward."