

Testimony in Support of LD 2224

Bruce Andrews

Kennebunk, Maine

March 7, 2024

Good morning and thank you for permitting me to give testimony in support of LD 2224. This proposed bill in two ways strengthens Maine's gun safety laws by improving the ease of temporarily retrieving guns from potentially threatening family members who are in a crisis (so-called "yellow flag" law) and expanding background checks to include universal background checks on all gun sales including unlicensed gun dealers.

As background, Maine has the highest gun death rate of all the New England states and the weakest gun safety laws of the New England states.

For the record, mental health per se is not the origin of our gun deaths. Only 3-5% of all violent crimes are attributed to mental health issues while our citizens who suffer from mental health issues are 11 times more likely to be the victims of violent crime.

Strengthening our "yellow flag" law as this bill proposes, will facilitate the process by which police officers can more

efficiently obtain a warrant to temporarily retrieve a gun from an owner who is experiencing a crisis that could deteriorate to a serious gun violence incident, particularly within a family environment. It has been shown that these crisis moments diminish rapidly over time and that delaying a gun owner's access to a weapon will decrease the likelihood of gun violence in as little as 72 hours.

As to universal background checks, 80% of all firearms bought for criminal use are purchased through unlicensed sellers of guns. By expanding background checks to unlicensed gun dealers, a significant gap will be closed that would typically result in gun violence.

I strongly support the measures proposed in LD 2224 and it "ought to pass."

Thank you,

Bruce Andrews