

Lianna Holden

Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary

**Testimony in 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"**

March 6, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and members of the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, my name is Lianna Holden. I am a member of the League of Women Voters Youth Council, the founder of the Student's Demand Action Chapter at Freeport High School and I live in Lewiston.

I am here today to speak in support of LD 2224 and LD 2238, and to urge the Legislature to take significant action to protect our communities from gun violence.

As a resident of Lewiston, my heart breaks at the lives that were torn apart on Oct. 25, 2023. The next couple of days I spent in lockdown I was paralyzed with fear as sirens went off constantly. I was terrified for my community's safety as well as my own. Since then our community has been changed forever. But gun violence in Maine did not begin or end on Oct. 25.

Every lockdown drill at school, every moment spent scanning for exits, every plan, every conversation among peers about what we would do if tragedy struck at our school — these are all part of the gun violence epidemic. The daily reminders of the threat of gun violence ruins our sense of security in a place where we should be learning.

To live like that is a kind of violence, and I don't accept that it is just the price we have to pay to live in the United States. We deserve better, your loved ones deserve better, and our communities deserve better. No child should grow up with shootings being normalized, it's not normal.

I strongly support expanding background checks and creating a 72-hour waiting period for gun purchases. Additionally, we need a true red flag law that works better for the police, moves quicker to get guns away from dangerous people, and gives families a way to directly help relatives who might be at risk.

And we need to do much, much more.

If you want to protect students and keep our communities safe, you must take action now to stop gun violence. Stand with me, my community, and every student who dreams of a future free from fear.

We can't wait any longer. You have the power to stop these terrible things from happening. I hope that you will use that power.