

Testimony of Lani Graham, MD, MPH

IN SUPPORT OF LD 2224 & LD 2238

**LD 2224: An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by
Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health
System**

&

**LD 2238: An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by
Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm
Purchases**

Both Presented by Senator Rotundo

Before the Judiciary Committee: March 7, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Judiciary Committee. **My name is Lani Graham. I live in Freeport.** I am a retired family practice physician and former Chief Public Health officer for Maine. I serve on the Public Health Committee for the Maine Medical Association (MMA). I am here in support of LD 2224 and LD 2238.

All Parts of both bills are important to act upon but given time constraints I am going to confine myself to two sections of interest LD 2224 and a brief remark about 2238.

First, it is essential that we begin a strong public health approach to the prevention of all types of violence. When we think about the need for health care services, it is all too easy to forget that public health efforts often prevent the need for health services, move the public forward in understanding an issue, and point to proper strategies through the collection and analysis of data. Please don't forget, and do assure funding, for that small addition at the very end of "Services for children and families" (F), which directs the Department to develop Injury and violence prevention programs, including data collection, synthesis, and evaluation.

Second, **while I applaud the effort to improve Maine's current Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO), we can do better. The medical professional needs to be removed from the effort.** That on-going requirement is serious barrier for the fast action, offers no benefits for the individual being assessed, and threatens the relationship that a person might have with health care. Families who know those close to them best, must have the ability to move quickly when help is needed. There are 21 other states that have good laws to address Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO). **The State of Colorado has one of the best ERPO laws,¹ and 4 years of experience with that law showing that it works well.²** But every other New England state except New Hampshire has a strong ERPO law that doesn't depend on a medical professional. Even Indiana and Colorado, both considered strong hunting states, have good ERPO laws. Please rethink this aspect of this otherwise excellent bill.

Finally, as **LD 2238 indicates, in a 72-hour waiting period, maybe a gun purchaser could consider if suicide is the answer to their problems or wonder if they really will be safer in their home with a firearm on the bedside table, when all available scientific evidence points against that conclusion.³**

Thank you for your attention.

¹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1177>

² <https://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-021-00353-7>

³ <https://www.safewise.com/resources/guns-at-home/#:~:text=In%20short%2C%20gun%20ownership%20does,more%20complicated%20for%20many%20homeowners.>