

Temple Beth El

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The Hon. Anne Carney
The Hon. Matt Moonen
Joint Standing Judiciary Committee
Maine State Legislature
Augusta, Maine

Re: L.D. 2224 and L.D. 2086

Dear Senator Carney and Representative Moonen:

My name is Rabbi Erica Asch and I am the rabbi at Temple Beth El in Augusta and am also currently serving as the president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. I am providing this testimony in support of L.D. 2224 and L.D. 2086.

Like many other clergy, I have presided over too many prayers and vigils for the victims and survivors of mass shootings and gun violence. There was the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, the Parkland school shooting, the Orlando nightclub shooting, the synagogue shooting in San Diego, and, of course, most recently, the shooting at Shmenge's Bar and Spare Time Recreation in our own backyard in Lewiston, Maine. While these prayer and vigils are important parts to healing the wounds which result from these horrific events, they are not enough. We must take action to try and stop there reoccurrence and the time to act is now.

Deuteronomy tells us: "when you build a a new house, you shall make your railing for your roof, so that you do not bring blood on your house if anyone should fall from it." Our world today is like a roof. It can be slippery, dangerous and difficult to navigate. It is up to us, to build the railing referred to in Dueteronomy, to protect our neighbors from the dangers of gun violence.

By expanding background checks to cover private gun sales and by expanding the provisions of Maine's Extreme Risk Protection Order law, L.D. 2224 will provide a railing to our community by helping to ensure that those who are prohibited from possessing guns can't purchase a gun or who pose an extreme risk to themselves or others can't keep such weapons while they are in crises. Likewise, L.D. 2238, will also provide a railing by providing a "cooling off" period between the time of an initial gun sale and the time taking possession and, thus, substantially reduce the risk of suicide by gun violence for individuals in crises.

L.D. 2224 and L.D. 2086 are not miracles and cure alls. They will, however, reduce the likelihood of gun related deaths. The Talmud teaches us that:

"One who takes a life, it is as though they have destroyed the universe. And one who saves a life, it is as though they have saved the universe." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5).

I urge you to vote to pass both L.D. 2224 and L.D. 2086 and thus to do your part to save a life and to save the universe. Thank you for providing me this opportunity to testify and I wish you luck in your deliberations.

Respectfully,

Rabbi Erica Asch