

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
State House, Room 438
Thursday, March 7th, 2024

Testimony in Support of 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”

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Emily Walsh and I am a senior at Bates College in Lewiston. I am here today to provide testimony in support of LD.2224 and LD.2238.

Lewiston will forever be the beloved town I went to college in, but it will also forever be the town where one of the deadliest mass shootings in the United States occurred. I vividly remember the horror I felt while on lockdown at Bates after finding out that one of the shootings had occurred at the Just in Time bowling alley. I had gone to a fundraiser event at Just in Time back in May for Big Brothers Big Sisters with my “little sister.” To this day, I can only picture Just in Time as a place filled with children laughing and asking for more pizza and begging to bowl another round. I cannot wrap my mind around the devastation that occurred there that night. Since Oct. 25th, I have spent countless hours grappling with the aftermath of this tragedy and having conversations with friends about how hopeless we feel about the state of gun violence in our country.

The legislation sponsored by Senator Peggy Rotundo and Representative Kristen Cloutier gives me a reason to have hope. These bills are fantastic first steps towards strengthening our gun laws in Maine and creating safer communities, ensuring that no more tragedies like what we went through in Lewiston ever happen again. Enacting waiting periods before firearm purchases, requiring background checks on unlicensed, advertised gun sales, and making improvements to our Yellow Flag law are good steps in the right direction.¹²

Yet, I hope that our lawmakers pass the strongest possible gun violence prevention measures by the end of this legislative session, including a true “Reg Flag Law” which has already been passed by 21 states and Washington DC.³

I urge you to please vote LD.2224 and LD.2238 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you for your time and

¹Katherine A. Vittes, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, “Legal Status and Source of Offenders’ Firearms in States with the Least Stringent Criteria for Gun Ownership,” *Injury Prevention* 19, no. 1 (2013): 26-31.

²Michael Luca, Deepak Malhotra, and Christopher Poliquin, “Handgun Waiting Periods Reduce Gun Deaths,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 46 (2017): 12162–12165.

³Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, “Extreme Risk Laws Save Lives,” February 14, 2024, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/extreme-risk-laws-save-lives/>