



TO: The Honorable Anne Carney
The Honorable Matt Moonen
Members of the Judiciary Committee

DATE: March 7, 2024

RE: 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

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and honorable members of the committee.

My name is Allyson Gardner. I'm a resident of Fryeburg and the Director of Maine Students Vote, our youth programs, for the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am testifying Ought to Pass on LD 2224 & LD 2238.

Since the early 1990s, the League of Women Voters has advocated for background checks on all gun sales and for publicly supported violence prevention programs.

As someone who works regularly in our schools, I think about the background checks run on our teachers, bus drivers, and school staff — all in the name of protecting our students. Background checks are a common-sense way of ensuring public safety. Currently, in Maine, someone can advertise a gun for sale in Uncle Henry's and sell any gun to a perfect stranger with no need for a background check. LD2224 would close this dangerous loophole.

As an organization that recognizes the value of data and research, the League strongly supports the proposed Injury and Violence Prevention Program. Comprehensive data is vital for bringing evidence to effective policies that will help reduce gun violence in Maine. With 40% of high school students reporting that it would be "sort of easy" or "very easy" to get a firearm,¹ it is clear that we need strong educational and safety materials about firearms. We strongly support the expansion of the Department of Human and Health Services to include "injury and violence prevention programs, including data collection, synthesis and evaluation." We urge this committee to support this new directive by adding funding for the DHHS to this bill.

While we support the changes that LD 2224 makes to our yellow flag law, we ask the committee to amend this portion of the bill to give family and community members a way to help their loved ones who

¹https://www.maine.gov/miyhs/sites/default/files/2023_Reports/Detailed_Reports/HS/MIYHS2023_Detailed_Reports_HS_State/Maine%20High%20School%20Detailed%20Tables.pdf (page 98)

are showing signs of crisis. Research shows that 80% of people considering suicide give some sign of their intent, and an FBI study of the pre-attack behaviors of active shooters found that for “active shooters under age 18, school peers and teachers were more likely to observe concerning behaviors than family members. For active shooters 18 years old and over, spouses/domestic partners were the most likely to observe concerning behaviors”.²

Establishing a waiting period between the sale and possession of a firearm has been shown to reduce both suicide and homicide rates.³ I ask that you take a moment to look at the list of recent gun violence crimes and deaths in our communities. The supplemental research to this testimony provides these stories for each of your districts. A waiting period like the one proposed in this bill could impact the frequency of these tragedies.

I ask you to vote in favor of both of these bills. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

² Robert Golden, Fred Peterson, and Carla Weiland. The truth about illness and disease. Infobase Publishing 2009 &

<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pre-attack-behaviors-of-active-shooters-in-us-2000-2013.pdf/view>

³ Michael 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.