

## Testimony in Support of LD 2119, 2224, 2086, and 2238

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Distinguished and Honorable members of the Joint Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kim Anderson True. I'm from Freeport and I am in support of reasonable gun safety legislation. I appreciate Senator Rotundo and the Governor for submitting LD 2119, 2224, 2086, and 2238, which taken together would eliminate some loopholes in background check requirements, impose a 72-hour waiting period before a gun purchaser could take possession of a weapon, and remove a barrier to law enforcement's ability to confine a person in crisis. But, in my opinion, these bills should be amended to better address the harm caused by gun violence in Maine today. Tougher laws are needed in Maine to protect vulnerable people from death and injuries from guns.

My husband and I raised two children in North Yarmouth during a less violent time. When we saw our children off on the school bus each morning, it did not enter our minds that our children could be shot while at school. After all, in 1989, the year our first child entered SAD 51's Mabel I. Wilson Elementary School, there was a total of 20 school shooting incidents in the United States.<sup>1</sup> But the number of school shootings in the US has been increasing; last year it ballooned to 346.<sup>2</sup> The United States is an outlier in the world in the number of shootings occurring on school grounds. In all, the United States has had 57 times as many school shootings as all other major industrialized nations combined.<sup>3</sup>

And as we know, gun violence does not occur only on school property. The average annual number of shootings in the US now tops 117,000.<sup>4</sup> As rates of gun violence in the US continue to rise, so too do deaths from that gun violence.<sup>5</sup> In 2023, 48,483 people in the US died from gun injury.<sup>6</sup> Shockingly, in the United States of America, gun injury is now the leading cause of death among children under the age of 19.<sup>7</sup> More than 2200 children suffered gun-related deaths in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> K-12 School Shooting Database

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Rowhani-Rahbar A, Moe C. School Shootings in the US: What is the State of Evidence? *J Adolescent Health*. 2019;64(6):683-84.

<sup>4</sup> Rapa, L., Katsiyannis, A., Scott, S. Durham, O., School Shootings in the United States, Pediatrics, March 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gramlich, J, What the data says about gun deaths in the U.S., Pew Research Center, April 26, 2023. **Note:** To put the number of gun-related deaths into context, in 2021, 46,980 people died in motor-vehicle crashes. National Safety Council Injury Facts, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Rapa, L., Katsiyannis, A., Scott, S. Durham, O., School Shootings in the United States, Pediatrics, March 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Ramos, E., Murphy, J. 6 Charts that Show the Rise of Guns in the U.S. – and the People Dying from Them. *NBC News*, May 25, 2002.

While Mainers may once have believed that gun violence occurring elsewhere in the United States could not happen here, that misplaced faith has been shattered by last year's horrific shootings in Bowdoin and Lewiston.

I am now a grandmother. I am stunned by how, in the years since I raised my own family, we have permitted gun violence to permeate our culture and impact our children's lives. Childcare centers in Maine now hold auctions to raise funds to install perimeter cameras to protect infants and toddlers from gun-wielding intruders. Active shooter drills in elementary schools traumatize young children as they practice what to do when gunfire is heard in the building or on the playground. High school students suspiciously eye fellow students who seem "different," wondering if the person has easy access to a gun. And you know what? They probably do. Maine's minimal gun safety laws are some of the weakest in the country,<sup>9</sup> resulting in the highest rate of gun deaths in New England at 12.6 gun deaths per 100,000 population.<sup>10</sup>

We can – and we must – change the status quo in order to better protect the people of Maine. One proven strategy for reducing gun violence is to implement gun safety laws. In states where elected officials have taken action to pass gun safety laws, fewer people die by gun violence.<sup>11</sup>

I urge this committee to amend the bills proposed by the Governor to:

- Require universal background checks prior to a sale of any firearm;
- Replace the Governor's original, so-called "yellow flag" law with an extreme risk protection order, a "red flag" law, as has been adopted in 21 states to temporarily remove guns from owners in crisis; and
- Prohibit the sale of AR-10 and AR-15 style weapons, bump stocks, and high capacity magazines.

Please pass tougher gun safety laws. Polls show that this is what the public wants.<sup>12</sup> Together, we can bring down the number of people in Maine killed or injured by firearms. And in so doing, we can reduce the daily worry of parents and grandparents throughout the state.<sup>13</sup>

Thank you.

Kim Anderson True  
Freeport

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<sup>9</sup> Everytown Gun Law Rankings, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Firearm Mortality by State, 2021, National Center for Health Statistics, CDC Control and Prevention.

<sup>11</sup> Massachusetts, which has far stricter gun safety laws than Maine, has the lowest rate of annual gun deaths in New England, at 3.4 deaths per 100,000 population Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Schaeffer, K., Key facts about Americans and guns. Pew Research Center, September 13, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> A third of US parents with K-12 students say they are very or extremely worried about a shooting ever happening at their children's school. Ibid.