

Victoria Libby

Testimony in Support: LD.2224 An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System from sponsor Sen. Rotundo, and LD 2238 An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases

March 7, 2024

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Victoria Libby. I live in South Portland, and I am a clinical psychologist here in Maine.

As a mental health practitioner I have seen firsthand the impact of gun violence. The trauma it inflicts is not just physical but psychological and these psychological wounds are widespread and insidious. Basic gun safety regulation is a vital step in preventative health care for our state. I submit here a letter asking for these regulations from more than 90 mental health practitioners from across the state, as well as another letter from 770 people from the general public in Maine.

I stand before you to speak in support of LD 2224, especially the background checks expansion. The loop holes in background checks for private gun sellers in Maine has left too many openings for firearms to end up in the hands of someone with malintent.

I appreciate that this bill seeks to address some of the shortcomings of the yellow flag bill, but I would like to see a faster, more streamlined process under the law that removes the requirement for a mental health evaluation and makes it easier for families to get help for their loved ones directly without involving the police.

The intensity of the impulse to hurt oneself or others is often transient. For this reason there is a critical window in which having access to a gun is particularly dangerous. This is why I fully support LD 2238. Waiting periods have been shown to reduce gun homicides by roughly 17%. As nearly 90% of Maine's gun deaths are suicides, a waiting period is likely to significantly reduce Maine's overall suicide rate and overall gun deaths. This critical window where the impulse to hurt ones self or others is highest is the same reason we need a fast process to temporarily remove a gun from someone who is struggling with this intent.

You cannot heal psychologically from trauma without first feeling a sense of safety. Implementing these basic regulations would begin to lay the groundwork for a greater sense of security and Mainers need that now more than ever. Please give us this opportunity to heal and prevent further trauma.

Thank you for your time and consideration