

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 morning/afternoon. Thank you all for being here today.

My name is Leif Thesen. I am currently a student at Bates college and I am here today, like many of my fellow students, to show my support for LD.2 2 2 4 and LD.2 2 3 8.

I’m an Eagle Scout– My grandfather taught me how to shoot a rifle just as his grandfather taught him... It was a valuable moment of generational bonding.

The bills I am urging you to pass today wouldn't take away precious moments like this. The bills I am urging you to pass today are to keep people safe. So that he has grandchildren to pass on these traditions to.

This winter break, when I was talking to a family friend, I mentioned I attend Bates college. He had never heard of it but when I said it was in Lewiston the connection clicked. Not to the college but to the shooting. “Oh I've never heard of Bates but Lewiston, Maine- that's where all those people were killed right?”

I don't like having to say yes, to think about the time in lockdown. I don't like remembering sitting in the dining hall as blue and red lights flashed through the blinds, police and helicopters passing the school. I don't like thinking of trying to sleep upstairs in the meeting rooms, live media coverage blaring from the projector screen, dozing in and out as the death count rose and fell, waiting— in fear- would the next notification be more deaths or would they finally catch him.

We know the shooting in October – the shooting that Lewiston is now known for – had warning signs.

We know passing these bills enacting a mandatory waiting period before the sale of firearms, expanding background checks on individuals wanting to purchase, as well as enacting an extreme risk protection law, will decrease access to guns for dangerous individuals (1,2,3).

I urge you to vote LD.2 2 2 4 and LD.2 2 3 8 “ought to pass”

So that when my grandfather asks my younger cousins if they want to learn how to shoot, they can see it as the valuable bonding opportunity it is instead of thinking of school lockdown drills and mass shootings. Thank you for your time.

Leif Thesen

(1) Katherine 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.

(2) <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/solutions/extreme-risk-protection-orders-ernos>

(3) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5343707/>