

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 Emilia Bois and I am a freshman at Bates College in Lewiston. I am testifying in support of LD 2224 and LD 2238. Gun violence in America is a public health epidemic. According to the CDC, 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in America every year. By implementing gun safety legislation like these two bills, we have the opportunity to save lives.

The US has the highest rate of gun violence in developed countries with populations over 10 million. Whenever I have met anyone from Europe, one of the first things they have asked me about living in the US is if I have ever encountered a shooting or if I really have to do safety training for shootings in school. I am sad to say that my answer is yes to both of those questions.

Gun violence has been a problem in the US for a long time, and with the growing issue of mass shootings, I sadly wasn’t shocked when there was a shooting in Lewiston only 2 miles from campus. However, being a new member of this community and experiencing the tragedy first hand was an experience that was not something I was prepared for. I felt as if a massive wound was bleeding freely upon the world and a heavy grief had settled deeply upon my heart. That feeling has not gone away and the sadness and loss felt by the community is not something that will go away either. Eighteen lives were taken. It is only chance that it wasn’t me or someone in my life. This crime that was committed in only a short matter of time has irreversible effects on our community.

We have the opportunity to prevent this from happening again. A so-called “Reg Flag” law could have prevented the Lewiston shooter from murdering 18 innocent people by taking him into protective custody and doing an evaluation after he was deemed mentally ill and unsafe. The changes proposed by this LD 2224 and the 72-hour waiting period from LD 2238 would also have the potential to stop someone from committing these unimaginable acts of violence and there is evidence that states with more gun laws have less gun violence. I understand that guns are a part of US culture, but these laws wouldn’t take that away from people, and our families and neighbors lives are at stake.

I believe that these bills are great starting points for safer communities in Maine. I also encourage that lawmakers consider enacting a true Red Flag law, assault weapons ban, and background checks on all gun purchases.

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

Emilia Bois

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