

Thursday, March 7th, 2024

Hello Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Maggie Amann. I am a 20-year-old Bates College student in Lewiston and I grew up in Scarborough, Maine. I stand here to express my support for LD. 2238 and LD. 2224, initiatives aimed at implementing a 72-hour waiting period for gun purchases and bolstering Maine's firearm laws and mental health system.

My presence here today is not driven by comfort or desire but by necessity. My anxiety around giving testimony pales in comparison to my fear of gun violence.

On the evening of October 25th last year, I was a month and a half into my study abroad experience in Spain. I woke up to news from my friends at Bates of an active shooter in Lewiston. Alone and terrified, I grappled with the possibility of losing loved ones to senseless gun violence: my peers, professors, community members, and students I work with in the school could all be gone.

And how could I begin to explain this sense of loss, fear, guilt, and anger, in a country where guns barely exist? The term "mass shooting" isn't even part of their vernacular.

Living abroad, where guns aren't a daily fear, underscores the stark reality of gun violence in America. Shootings have been on the rise since before I was born. I was doing "lock-down" drills in Maine Public Schools when I was 5. When I was 9 years old, 26 innocent lives were taken in the Sandy Hook school shooting. And when I was 20, America had its 10th deadliest shooting in history in a city I consider a second home.

My community, still reeling from the recent tragedy, lives in perpetual fear of further loss, as do I. October 25th is burned in my memory.

We have an opportunity to address gun violence in Maine today. Passing a 72-hour waiting period for gun purchases and enhancing background checks are crucial steps in curbing impulsive violence and safeguarding lives. As a Maine resident and a Bates student, I implore you to prioritize public safety and vote "Ought to Pass" on LD.2224 and LD.2238. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

(Giffords Law Center, Maine Gun Safety)