



Testimony of Deborah Hagler MD, MPH, FAAP in Support of LD 2238- An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases and LD 2224 An Act to Strengthen Public Safety by Improving Maine's Firearm Laws and Mental Health System

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Senator Carney and Representative Moonen and Members of the Committee on Judiciary. My name is Deborah Hagler. I reside in Harpswell. I have been a practicing pediatrician in Maine for 27 years and am the immediate past President of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics in support of LD 2238 and LD 2224.

Imagine some of the difficult intense emotions a distressed and dysregulated adolescent whose brain is developing may be experiencing that may lead them to bleak violent spaces and then think how depression can distort these spaces.

There is a crisis in the realm of child and adolescent mental health. Currently pediatricians are having some very tough conversations with patients. We are teaching adolescents and their supporters to identify the thoughts and distortions; we are teaching methods for coping and for finding shelter in the storms of frightening thoughts and handing out crisis hotline numbers. We talk about suicide and impulsivity -there is a strong link between impulsivity¹ in one series of teens and young adults 25% of the group contemplated their suicide attempt for 5 minutes or less;² we talk about access to lethal means - firearms are especially concerning as 85-90% of those who attempt suicide with a fire arm will not survive the attempt.³ Firearm access whether it be by immediate purchase or unfettered access to a firearm in the home increase the odds the odds of suicide by 3 fold.⁴

We all want to keep our kids safe- as a society we have gone to great lengths to do this in many arenas except for firearms- now the leading cause of death in youth.⁵

States with waiting period laws after the purchase of the firearm have a 7-11% reduction in firearm suicides versus states without.³ Wisconsin recently repealed their waiting period and saw firearm suicides increase.⁶ States with more robust firearm regulations especially universal background checks have fewer adolescents carrying handguns⁷ and fewer pediatric firearm deaths.⁸ Please give our youth time to let things pass and live their best lives and vote ought to pass for LD2238 and LD2224.

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