

TO: The Honorable Anne Carney
The Honorable Matt Moonen
Members of the Judiciary Committee

DATE: March 7, 2024

RE: LD 2238 An Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases

Good morning Senator Carney, Representative Mooney, and members of the committee. My name is Starr Gilmartin, a resident of Trenton, Maine. I am a licensed clinical social worker and also a volunteer on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Maine. I am here to urge Ought to Pass on LD 2238, an Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases.

I am a Licensed Clinical social worker with over 22 years of experience working in emergency psychiatric care in Maine emergency rooms. Many of the patients I meet are experiencing suicidal thoughts or have actually made an attempt to end their life. Some come in willingly and some come involuntarily with police. One of the tools that would help in preventing completed suicides is not having access to firearms. What we have seen both anecdotally and in studies, is that a major risk factor for completed suicides is the access to a firearm. National data indicates that male handgun owners had a suicide risk that was 8 times higher than it was for male non-owners; and for female handgun owners, it was 35 times higher. (Stanford Medicine 2023) We already know that most deaths from a gun in the state of Maine are from self-inflicted completed suicides. In Maine, 89% of gun deaths are suicides and 8% are homicides. This is compared to 57% and 40% nationwide, respectively (Everytown for Our Safety). Access to guns presents an enduring risk of suicide. (Studdert 2020).

The odds of dying by suicide are more than 3 times higher for those with access to firearms compared to those without access. Because we know that the majority of suicide attempts are impulsive, with little time passing between the decision to attempt and the attempt itself we know that a delay can save lives. ([Clinical strategies for reducing firearm suicide - PMC.](#)) Not only are guns associated with increased risk of suicide for Mainers, but they also present a higher risk of lethality. About 85% of gun-related suicide attempts are fatal. The use of guns is quick, does not allow for 2nd guessing once the trigger is pulled, and the results are irreversible (Harvard T.H. Chan). Studies have shown that waiting periods are associated with reduced rates of firearm suicide.

Imagine what a readily accessible handgun might mean to the veteran traumatized by his daily or nightly re-experiences of combat; the high school student who was dumped the night before his prom; the newly separated and unemployed male who drinks too much to drown his sorrow? I hope you will agree with me that a 72-hour wait period is an acceptable intervention we can and should take in saving Maine lives. And I hope you will vote ought to pass on the 72-hour waiting period.

Thank you for your time and service.