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*Testimony of Representative Margaret Craven in support of
LD 2238, an Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for
Certain Firearm Purchases
Before the Judiciary Committee*

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and honorable members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Margaret Craven, and I represent House District 93, which is part of Lewiston. I am here today to speak in strong support of **LD 2238, an Act to Address Gun Violence in Maine by Requiring a Waiting Period for Certain Firearm Purchases**.

In the 129th Legislature, we passed a bill that requires the Maine CDC to keep track of the incidences of injury and deaths from firearms in the state. In 2021, there were 178 deaths from firearms in Maine, two of which were accidental, 17 were homicides and 158 were suicides. One death was deemed, "undetermined." These numbers come from the 2021 CDC report, which is attached, and the 2023 report should be published soon. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for ages 10 to 34 and the third-leading death for Mainers 35 to 44.

If these deaths were caused by just about anything besides gun violence, people would be quick to do something to rectify it. The gun lobby seems to have some kind of magic to be able to convince people that access to guns is not the problem, but I say access to guns is the problem.

According to the Pew Research Center, and the US CDC, there were more deaths from firearms in the US in 2021 than in any other year on record.

Gun violence is an epidemic. Gun violence is a public health threat. According to the American Psychiatric Association, an overwhelming 87% of Americans think gun violence is a public health threat¹. In 2016, the American Medical Association, our country's largest physicians' group, adopted a formal policy calling gun violence a public health crisis.²

We all know that the human brain does not mature until well into a person's 20s. Young people, especially when experiencing despair or hopelessness, are impetuous and can lack the maturity to make good decisions.

Behaviorally-informed gun policy has the potential to reduce violence without imposing new restrictions on anyone's right to own a gun. Waiting periods are effective, and they are also

supported by a majority of Americans and roughly 50% of gun owners³. Waiting periods do not restrict gun ownership, they create a window of time in which someone in crisis could get the help they need. It's been proven in states that enacted waiting periods that it reduces the incidents of suicide.

Eleven states have some form of a waiting period to purchase a firearm. They are VT, RI, NJ, MD, IL, MN, WA, CO, CA, HI, FL and the District of Columbia.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you have for me.

1. <https://www.psychiatry.org/newsroom/news-releases/americans-overwhelmingly-see-gun-violence-as-a-public-health-issue-they-want-congress-to-act-and-cdc-to-conduct-research>
2. <https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/ama-calls-gun-violence-public-health-crisis>
3. <https://behavioralscientist.org/the-case-for-handgun-waiting-periods/>