

Testimony in Support of LD 2238

Honorable members of the Maine Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Marina Percival and I'm from Belfast. I'm here this evening to testify and support of LD 2238. I am deaf, and I use a speech-to-text app on my phone to communicate.

First, I would like to express my condolences and support to all the people in the Lewiston area who continue to suffer from the consequences of the horrific act of gun violence that occurred there.

As a lifelong Mainer it has been devastating to realize that my conception of my beloved state has changed forever. While LD 2238 will not eliminate gun violence, I believe it will reduce it and help restore my sense of safety and faith in my community.

I am not opposed to gun ownership, in fact, I have considered purchasing a gun for personal safety given the escalation of gun violence in our country.

However, I cannot legally purchase a gun because I was committed briefly to Riverside the state hospital. Even though I have never threatened or committed violence against myself or others and even though my psychiatrist evaluation was that I should never have been committed in the first place. Nevertheless, everyone who has ever been committed to the state hospital is prohibited from owning a gun in the state of Maine. This appears to be a clear violation of our Second Amendment rights.

Even though I was committed by error, and was suffering from a medical condition not a mental health condition, the stigma attached to having been committed has seriously impacted my reputation and standing in my close community in Belfast. I was formally a highly respected member of the community and served on the city council.

I do not believe that people with mental health issues are at significantly more risk of committing gun violence or any type of violence. However, anybody who has made a serious threat of violence, whether they have a mental illness or not, needs to be evaluated, and their guns need to be temporarily confiscated until they are deemed to no longer be a threat to the community.

I think that is very difficult for local police departments and sheriff departments to make a determination as to the risk of one of their citizens poses, and to confiscate their guns. I don't think that such a decision should be in the hands of local law enforcement.

Instead, I believe that there should be a state legal entity charged with making the determination as to whether someone is at serious risk of committing gun violence, and that agency would have the authority to get a search and seizure warrant out urgently. Those employed would have ideally a background in both public safety, psychology, and risk assessment.

Thank you for your time. I am honored to be a citizen of the state of Maine, being served by public servants like you who have listened to testimony now for many hours. I hope you can return home soon. Thank you for your good work.

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