

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

LD 2283

An Act to Enact the Crisis Intervention Order Act to Protect the Safety of the Public

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Austin Vaughan, and I am a third-year medical student at UNECOM. I am submitting this testimony in support of LD2283 on behalf of myself.

Between the Parkland shooting and the recent tragedy in Lewiston - the two most recent mass shootings that have deeply affected me - 2079 days have passed. 17 people lost their lives in Florida, 19 here in Maine. However, in the interim, approximately 250,000 other individuals have lost their lives to firearms in this country¹. The number feels unfathomable, but it underscores the undeniable reality - gun violence in this country is a public health crisis.

LD2283 proposes meaningful changes to the current process for temporarily removing firearms from individuals who pose a significant risk to others or themselves. Extreme risk protection orders are endorsed by various national health organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, and the American Public Health Association, and for good reason. Studies from Indiana and Connecticut, the only two states with similar laws enacted for longer than a decade, indicate that for every 10 gun-removal actions, a life is saved.

Maine's current law represents a thoughtful approach to a challenging issue, but time has revealed significant shortcomings. Firstly, it burdens law enforcement officers with making primary assessments of an individual's mental health or capacity before taking them into custody, adding strain to an already difficult job and exacerbating an already precarious situation. Additionally, the current law disproportionately emphasizes mental health, despite the existence of numerous other risk factors contributing to the likelihood of violence. Finally, the current procedure of placing individuals in protective custody during assessment may deter loved ones from filing petitions in the first place. Those who file for firearm removal, especially when self-harm is a concern, do so out of love and concern for the individual at risk. The inherent trauma associated with being taken into custody creates a scenario where warning signs are dismissed out of fear of further impacting someone they care for. LD 2283 addresses these concerns in a meaningful way by establishing an efficient, safe avenue to temporarily remove firearms from at-risk individuals in Maine.

Following the Parkland shooting, Florida - a state that touts itself as the freest in the nation - enacted an extreme risk protection order law. Because this law isn't about removing freedoms. It's about supporting Mainers in times of trouble, protecting individuals from the threat of gun violence, and ultimately, preserving the right to life for everyone in this state.

I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2283. Thank you for your time.