

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, honorable and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am Judy Williams from Belfast, a member of the Gun Safety Work Group of The First Church in Belfast, and I am here today to support LD 2283. In Maine, 89% of those committing suicides use firearms. Forty-seven percent of Mainers own firearms. I am alarmed by what these figures together say about the safety of everyone in our state.

From 2017 to 2024, emergency room visits involving suicidal intent have risen in 11 of Maine's 16 counties. In Aroostook County that rate is up 35%; in Oxford County, 36%; in Piscataquis County, 41%; in Kennebec County, 59%; and in Androscoggin County, which includes the city of Lewiston, that rate has risen a staggering 307%, clearly illustrating the mental health impact of that city's mass shooting.

LD 2283 will do much to protect many of those who are considering suicide, because it allows family and household members who know best the mental health of their loved ones to begin the process of temporarily separating them from their firearms. This is essential, given the ongoing shortage of police officers, with Maine ranking 43rd nationwide in officers per 1000 residents. This is especially problematic in the same rural areas of the state that are experiencing increased suicidal attempts.

Though opponents claim that Extreme Risk Protection Orders violate due process rights of gun owners, this is not true. LD 2283 gives gun owners notice, the opportunity to be heard, and a decision by a neutral decision-maker--the three requirements of due process.

LD 2283 will protect vulnerable Maine citizens in times of crisis without violating due process laws for gun owners. I urge you to vote ought to pass on LD 2283.

Sources:

Maine's suicide by firearm rate:

Report to the Legislature. February 2023. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9742>

Maine's firearm ownership rate:

World Population Review. 2024. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/gun-ownership-by-state>

Emergency room visits with suicidal intent:

Maine Suicide Intervention Program. April 4, 2024. <https://www.maine.gov/suicide/data-and-statistics.shtml>

Shortage of law enforcement personnel:

2022 Police Employment Statistics. August 10, 2023. <https://www.safehome.org/resources/states-with-most-police/>

Due Process:

Procedural Due Process. Cornell Law School.

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/procedural_due_process#:~:text=Procedural%20due%20process%20refers%20to,by%20a%20neutral%20decision%2Dmaker.