

April 5, 2024

Testimony in Support of LD 2283

Senator Carney, Representative Moonen and members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is Lynn Ellis and I live in Brunswick. I have been an advocate for the passage of commonsense gun safety bills since the school shooting at Sandy Hook which make this my 11th year. I am a member of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition. I am a retired social worker. I hear from my colleagues and others that the passage of such laws is a marathon and not a sprint. I could accept that but for one thing. Every day, on average, in this country 112 people die by gun violence and it is the leading cause of death in children. Credible sources state that it is a public health crisis in the United States with over 43,000 deaths every year.

This will probably be my last time testifying in the peoples' house and I feel compelled to tell you I am disheartened by the ongoing pushback from those who say that advocates like myself are trying to take something away from them; we are infringing on their rights.

We are literally trying to save lives here. And every one of these laws has been found to be constitutional in one court after another. With the number of suicides in Maine continuing to rise mustn't we take action? If not gun safety laws, what?

LD2283, essentially an Extreme Risk Protection Order seeks to protect a person from doing harm to themselves or others in a time of crisis and to petition the court to have firearms removed. This situation can happen to anyone. I've never told this story to anyone publicly. I will now. When I was 14 years old I was dating a boy and my father decided I should not see him anymore. I'm from a rural town in Maine and dating and even marriage often happened at a young age. It seemed like the end of the world to me. I could not imagine going on if I couldn't see this boy. Without thinking too much, and certainly with a teenage mind not fully developed I began taking pills from the medicine cabinet. I lay on my bed and wished myself dead. I had no mental health history, and was considered a bright, engaging teenager. I am thankful that my father kept his many firearms locked away and I could not access them. I got very sick but I did not die. And with support from my mother, I sorted out the feelings I had and never felt the urge to take my life again.

I'm so disheartened by the rhetoric of those who accuse me and others who advocate as I do that we have a hidden agenda. The only agenda is to save lives.

Please vote LD2283 out of committee and pass all the gun safety bills that come before the full legislature.