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

My name is Dana Williams. I am a disabled veteran, and I live in Belfast. I am a member of The First Church in Belfast Gun Safety Work Group. My testimony is in support of LD 2283.

In 2009, I officiated, in my role as Notary Public, at the wedding of a colleague and her partner, both were close friends of mine. These young people were my children's ages. They were intelligent, caring, hard working people. Not surprisingly, they were very much in love, and the day was filled with joyfulness.

Over the course of the next ten years, I watched their family grow. They were excellent parents. They were blessed with three young children and expecting their fourth. Then, in 2019 all of that changed. The young man was struggling with depression at that time. His wife was aware of this, and they worked together to try to overcome it, but in September of 2019, he walked away from his home and shot himself. In the aftermath of his death, his widow was devastated. She felt that she should have been able to save him.

Maine's Yellow Flag law was not in place at that time. It would be another year before it was enacted. Even then, the idea of an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) would not be an option. As I have reflected on the tragedy of my friend and the family he left behind, I have mourned the fact that his widow did not have the tools she needed to have the gun taken away. She knew her husband well, but she was unable to turn to the authorities who, at the time, could not remove the weapon.

It is not possible to turn back time and rescue my friend, but I feel it is incumbent upon us to do all that we can to provide the tools that would enable family and friends to act in the interests of a person in crisis. That would offer the possibility of preventing the sorrow of those left behind. In our state with its high suicide rate, the passage of LD 2283 would have a positive impact on the many people who are faced with the loss of someone dear to them.

Thank you for your consideration of my perspective regarding LD 2283. I urge you to support this legislation.