

Mark Howes  
Whitefield, Maine  
Support of LD 424

Good day, members of the committee. My name is Mark Howes, and I'm here to support LD 424, a bill that would allow individuals aged 18 to 20 to carry concealed handguns under the same laws as other adults in Maine. This issue hits close to home for me.

I have a 19-year-old daughter who works as a medical assistant right here in our community. She's a quiet, kind-hearted young woman—someone who goes out of her way to care for people and animals alike. A few weeks ago, she sat me down and asked something I never expected: 'Dad, can I start carrying a concealed handgun?' I was stunned. She told me she no longer feels safe walking to her car after work or driving home at night. That's not the Maine I grew up in, but it's the reality she's facing.

As her father, I've taken this seriously. I've spent countless hours training her—teaching her firearm safety, responsibility, and how to defend herself if it ever comes to that. She's proven she's capable and mature **beyond** her years. At 19, she's an adult in every sense: she works 40 hours a week, goes to school part time, pays taxes, and makes her own decisions. So **why** should she be denied the same rights as someone just two years older? Maine's Constitution says every citizen's right to keep and bear arms shall never be questioned. That shouldn't come with an arbitrary age cutoff for law-abiding adults.

LD 424 isn't about reckless kids—it's about trusting young adults like my daughter to exercise their constitutional rights responsibly. She's not asking for special treatment; she's asking for equality. I urge you to pass this bill and give her—and others like her—the chance to protect themselves in a world that's not as safe as it once was. Thank you.