

Maine gun safety COALITION

Testimony in OPPOSITION to four bills:

- LD 424 - An Act Concerning the Concealed Carrying of a Handgun by an Individual Who Is 18 Years of Age but Under 21 Years of Age (Rep. Collins)
- LD 829 - An Act to Standardize the Laws Regarding the Carrying of Concealed Handguns in State Parks (Sen. Haggan)
- LD 1049 - An Act to Eliminate the Duty to Inform a Law Enforcement Officer When Carrying a Concealed Handgun Without a Permit (Rep Poirier)
- LD 998 - An Act Regarding an Employer's Authority to Prohibit an Employee from Storing a Firearm in the Employee's Vehicle (Rep. Collins)

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Nacole Palmer. I live in Bowdoin, and I serve as the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition.

I stand before you to ask that you oppose all four of these very dangerous bills: LDs 424, 829, 1049, and 998. Each of these bills is dangerous for different reasons, but they are all connected by a shared ideology from the gun lobby that worked to craft these very bills. The bills share the idea that the concealed carry of firearms should have no restrictions whatsoever, regardless of location, regardless of the age of the carrier, and most importantly of all, regardless of the literal danger to our communities and bloodshed that unfettered access to firearms has already caused in Maine.

I assume you are all aware of the crisis of firearm crimes and shootings that are ravaging communities in our cities, especially Lewiston. A recent SUN Journal article¹ made clear two points that are relevant to LD 424, the bill that seeks to lower the age for permitless carry of concealed weapons from 21 to 18 years old:

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<https://www.sunjournal.com/2025/02/15/as-shootings-become-part-of-the-backdrop-of-lewiston-the-city-is-trying-to-come-to-grips-with-a-growing-problem/?uuid=66b739fc-0055-4c1f-9e60-8be24f9d11fe&lid=2712>

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1. The year that Maine stopped requiring permits for concealed carry, firearm homicides in Lewiston began to rise. In 2015, before permitless concealed carry was passed, Lewiston had 3 shootings over the course of a year. In 2022, there were 42 shootings over the course of the year. The article describes how people are afraid to be outside, afraid to let their kids play outside in Lewiston, Maine because the shootings are so common now.
2. The other point that the article makes is that in 49% of these shootings, the shooters are younger than 21 years old.

With a crisis of this magnitude on the streets of our great state, lowering the age of requiring permits for concealed carry would add gas to the fire. Firearms are already the leading cause of death for 18 to 20 year olds². Police in Lewiston have no recourse if they think someone is concealed carrying and over 21. At least from 18 to 21, they can ostensibly stop someone before a shooting happens. This bill would strip law enforcement of what power they have to prevent shootings. It is a terrible idea for Maine, and I urge you to vote ought not to pass.

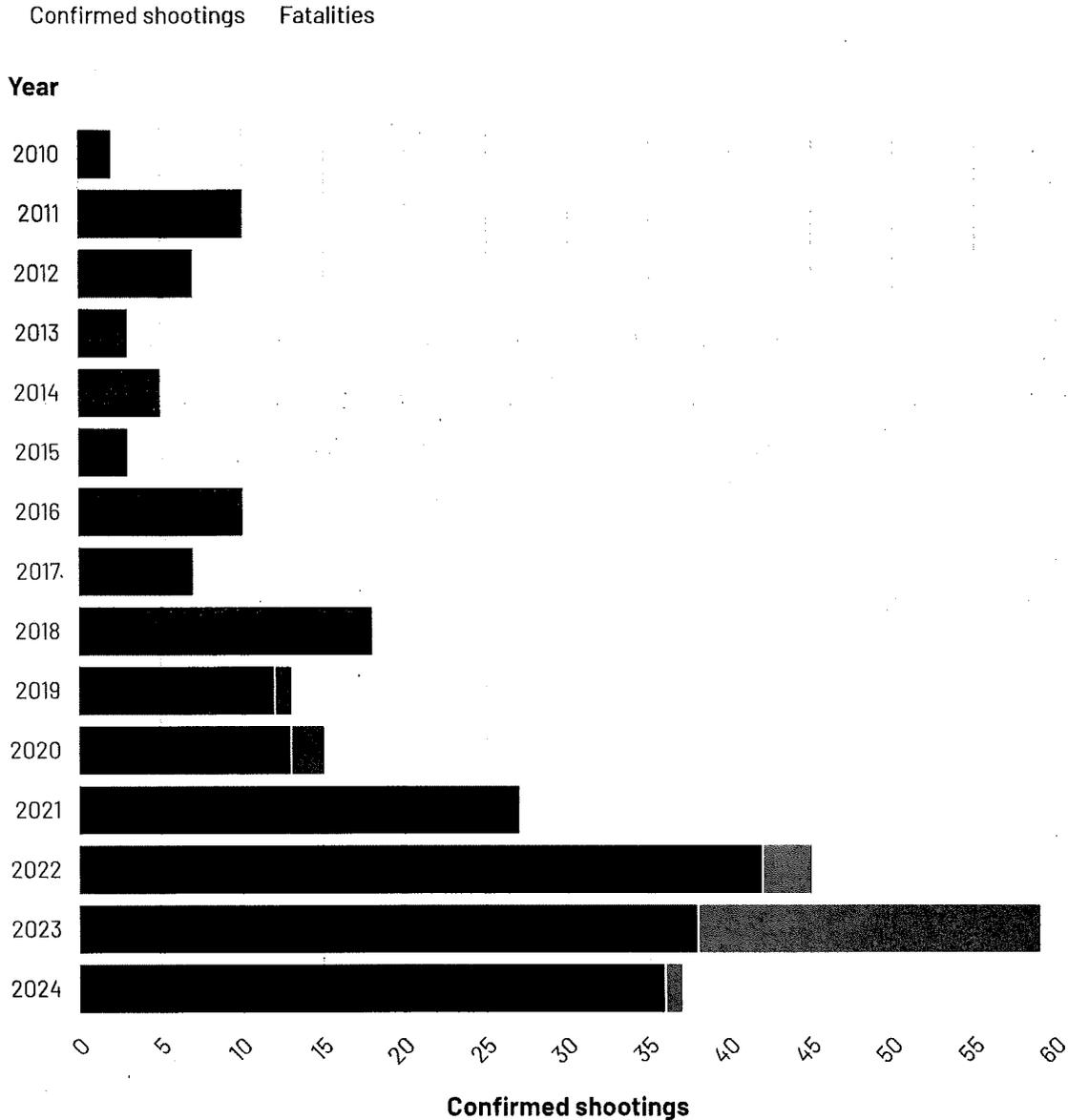
With little time left, I turn to LD 1049, which would directly endanger our law enforcement officers. Law enforcement already have a dangerous job. And this bill seeks to put them in even more danger by removing the requirement for any individual to inform the officers that they are carrying, even those who have not met the relatively low bar required to obtain a permit. Seriously? Here in Maine, we care about our law enforcement officers. This bill would needlessly endanger the very people we rely on to keep us all safe...thus endangering us all.

There is more in my written testimony about the other two, very dangerous bills, but I will simply point out that with firearm theft from cars at an all time high, including here in Maine, LD 998 is an unwise step that would further increase the access that criminals have to deadly weapons.

I urge you to vote ought not to pass on all four of these dangerous bills. Thank you for your time and consideration.

² <https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/saved/D158/D428F583>

Confirmed shootings in Lewiston



Source: Lewiston Police Department • From 2010 to 2018, Lewiston saw no shooting fatalities.
Sun Journal Staff Graphic

Lewiston police Chief David St. Pierre said in a Sept. 3 city hall workshop that the city has experienced a “recent uptick” in shootings. St. Pierre said LPD logged 42 confirmed shootings in 2022 and 45 in 2023, adding that data for previous years was not available.

Data later provided by LPD, though, reveal figures dating to 2010 and the results show an uptick starting in 2018.

Shootings from 2010-17 stayed mostly in the single digits. Then LPD reported 18 confirmed shootings in 2018, 12 in 2019, 13 in 2020 and 27 in 2021. They rose to 42 shootings in 2022, and, conflicting with St. Pierre's earlier figure, dropped slightly to 38 in 2023.

According to LPD's monthly statistics, the numbers add up to 35 confirmed shootings last year. Two were recorded for January 2025.

"Confirmed" shootings mean police were able to establish a crime scene with evidence of a shooting. This data does not include unconfirmed reports of shootings, suicide or accidental discharges.

Confirmed shootings can be extremely difficult to establish, St. Pierre said Tuesday. Rigorous investigation — including hours of combing areas where shootings are reported, reviewing hours of surveillance footage and hours of witness interviews — often yields no confirmations, St. Pierre said.

"We do get a lot of reports of shots fired that we can't confirm. ... Without shell casings or video, it's tough to verify. That doesn't mean it didn't happen, but sometimes there's just no evidence left behind," St. Pierre said.

"We want to be transparent with crime data, but there's always going to be a gap between reported incidents and confirmed cases," he added. "We've had cases where a shooting gets reported at one location, but when we investigate, we find out it actually happened somewhere else. That makes data tracking tricky."

Lewiston City Councilor Joshua Nagine said St. Pierre initially advised him that shooting data has been officially tracked only over the past four years. A Freedom of