

Testimony in support of

LD 677, An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of “Machine Gun” and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-Fire Device

LD 1126, An Act Requiring Serial Numbers on Firearms and Prohibiting Undetectable Firearms

March 25, 2025

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Art Blank and I live in Bar Harbor and speaking representing the Healthy Acadia Board of Directors, a nonprofit community health organization serving primarily Hancock and Washington counties in addition to partnering with others to deliver services across the state. We’re here speaking in strong support of LD 677 and LD 1126.

We support a public health approach to gun safety, to uphold Maine’s traditions of safe and appropriate gun use, while supporting common-sense policies regarding access to guns that support the safety and well-being of all Mainers. We believe these measures discussed today meet this goal.

LD 677, An Act to Update the Statutory Definition of “Machine Gun” and Prohibit Possession of a Rapid-Fire Device promotes common-sense policy, noting that Maine already recognizes the danger of machine guns that fire dozens of rounds in rapid succession. Modern technology is a wonderful thing, except when it is not. Rapid fire and machine gun conversion devices now proliferate thwarting the intent of existing laws. Here in Maine, we continue to see the trauma caused by the shooting in Lewiston two years ago and need to prevent its reoccurrence.

These devices in their many forms have been used in high-profile and mass shootings nationwide, including the mass murder in Las Vegas at a concert in 2017 that killed 60 people and wounded over 400 others. Some of these devices enable a shooter to fire up to 1,200 rounds per minute. Other examples range from a man in Fargo, North Dakota, who killed one officer and injured two others, with a semiautomatic rifle outfitted with a binary trigger, and a hellfire trigger device was found in an elementary school classroom after a shooter in Uvalde, Texas, killed 19 students and two teachers.

Current Maine law bans weapons that have certain devices attached to them, but State lawmakers should directly address the sale and proliferation of these devices themselves, rather than just wait until they are attached to a firearm. These devices have only one purpose and that is to undermine the spirit and letter of the law and are a threat to public safety. Again, this is a common-sense policy that will allow law enforcement the best opportunity to prevent another tragedy and protect the well-being of all Mainers.

LD 1126, An Act Requiring Serial Numbers on Firearms and Prohibiting Undetectable Firearms, is again a common-sense closing of a loophole that exists in current law. The use of serial numbers as a law enforcement tool is well established. Unserialized firearm products are treated differently under the law than all other firearms, including the fact that they are often sold anonymously with no background checks or sale records, again in part because of our wonderfully expanding technology allows anyone to quickly and easily build their own deadly weapons from untraceable kits and components.

The core component of these products is typically an “unfinished” firearm frame or receiver. The unserialized firearm industry will leave its products just unfinished enough to attempt to escape the legal definition of a “firearm,” in order to avoid the requirement that their products be serialized.

These guns are even accessible to young children and teens—for whom firearms are the leading cause of death—who are ordinarily not legally able to purchase firearms. Because these products can be acquired with no background check, anyone of any age can get their hands on an untraceable weapon. In 2022, a 16-year-old in Maine shot and killed a man using an unserialized firearm assembled from parts ordered online anonymously, without a background check, for about \$600. Firearm serialization laws will prevent this. Again, this is a common-sense approach to reducing gun violence, a key threat to our public health.

In the interest of time, I would refer you Healthy Acadia's Statement on Gun Safety attached to this testimony for further information. Thank you for your time and commitment to a safe community, and I urge you to vote OUGHT to pass on LD's 677 and 1126.



STATEMENT ON GUN SAFETY

Healthy Acadia

Healthy Acadia is dedicated to working with community members and partners to build safe, healthy, vibrant communities across the region, and to help all people thrive and reach their potential. We are deeply concerned about gun violence as a key threat to the safety, health, and well-being of our communities. We support a public health approach to gun safety, to uphold Maine's traditions of safe and appropriate gun use, such as hunting, and to ensure safety and well-being for all Mainers.

As we witnessed in Lewiston on October 25, 2023, our communities in Maine are not immune to the tragic, horrific mass shootings that have devastated communities across the United States. Our hearts go out to the victims of the Lewiston shooting - and of all shootings, their families and loved ones, law enforcement and other first responders, and everyone who grapples with trauma, grief, fear, anger, and more in the wake of these shootings. We know that we can and must do more to protect our communities from the threat and devastation that shootings like these cause.

Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death, as well as disability and injury. More than 42,000 people in the U.S. die from gun violence on average each year, and tens of thousands more are injured.¹ The U.S. has among the highest gun death rates in the world for all ages, and in particular for children. It is the leading cause of death for children (1-17) in the United States.² Guns are the leading method of suicide in the U.S., causing more than half of all suicide deaths.³ In Maine, while our homicide rate has historically been below the national average, we know that this can change abruptly, as we witnessed in Lewiston. In addition, our rate of suicides and suicide attempts using firearms is much higher - the rate of death from a gun suicide is 33% higher in Maine than in the U.S. as a whole.⁴ Based on a recent state report, 89% of Maine's gun deaths in 2021 were suicides.⁵

The rates of gun suicide are particularly alarming, as suicide attempts by gunfire result in death 85% of the time, in comparison with just 3% for the leading method of attempted suicide, drug

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal/index.html>; <https://www.bradyunited.org/key-statistics>

² <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/child-and-teen-firearm-mortality-in-the-u-s-and-peer-countries/>

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/26/what-the-data-says-about-gun-deaths-in-the-u-s/>;

⁴ <https://www.pressherald.com/2022/06/08/gun-suicides-in-maine-far-outpace-u-s-rate/>

⁵ <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9742>

overdose.⁶ Nearly 90% of people who survive an attempted suicide do not go on to die by suicide, and so the lethality of suicide attempts by firearms is particularly devastating, destroying the chance for a person to recover.⁷ Each of these events not only impacts the victim and their immediate family but the broader community as well. Fear, anxiety, grief, and uncertainty ripple through the victim's family and neighborhood in ever-widening circles as a stone thrown in a lake.

Healthy Acadia stands in strong support of gun violence prevention to reduce the devastation caused by firearms as a critical part of ensuring safety, health, and well-being for all people across our communities. We are committed to working with our team and partners to:

- Promote gun safety education, so that Mainers using guns appropriately can do so safely, without harm to themselves or others;
- Promote safe gun storage, so that individuals who should not have access to guns, especially children, will not accidentally obtain access;
- Support continued advocacy to ensure that school and community-based activities, trainings, drills, and education related to shootings follow evidence-based and best practices, promoting resilience and health, and minimizing trauma.
- Support efforts at the state level to continue to collect data on gun-related deaths and injuries in order to understand the causes and evaluate interventions;
- Identify risk factors associated with gun violence, as well as resilience/protective factors that help prevent gun violence (e.g. access to mental health services, youth resilience programs, etc.);
- Continue to develop, implement, and evaluate interventions and policies to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors;
- Support common-sense policies regarding access to guns that support the safety and well-being of all Mainers;
- And more, guided by community needs and priorities.

We are committed to these and other actions to support a thoughtful public health approach to gun safety, to continue to support Maine's traditions of safe gun use, and to ensure health and safety for all Mainers. We are committed to building communities in which all people can grow and thrive, have ready access to resources that support the challenges they face, and reach their full potential.

⁶ [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/guns-suicide/#:~:text=Though%20guns%20are%20not%20the,than%203%20percent%20of%20cases.\)](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/guns-suicide/#:~:text=Though%20guns%20are%20not%20the,than%203%20percent%20of%20cases.)

⁷ [https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/guns-suicide/#:~:text=Though%20guns%20are%20not%20the,than%203%20percent%20of%20cases.\)](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/magazine/magazine_article/guns-suicide/#:~:text=Though%20guns%20are%20not%20the,than%203%20percent%20of%20cases.)