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American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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April 14, 2025

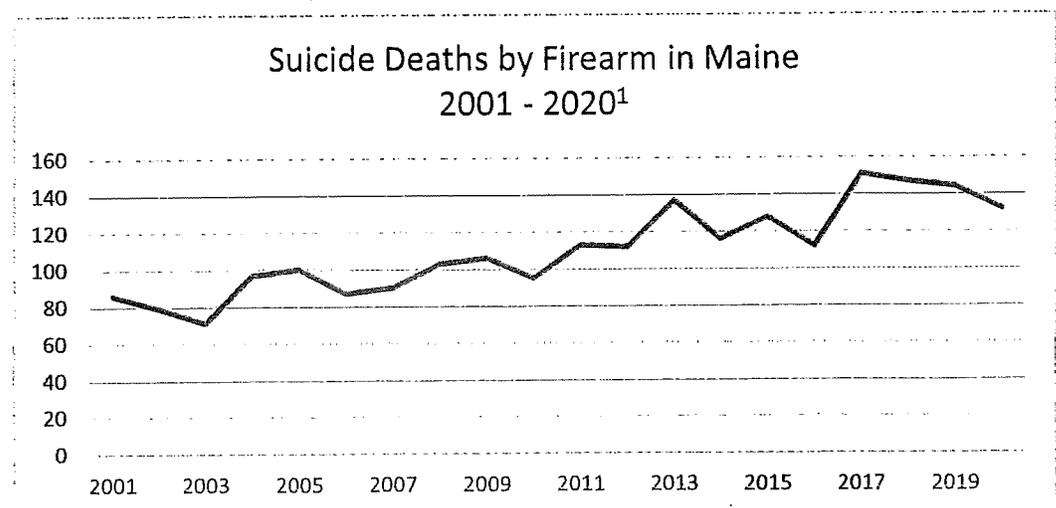
Subject: Testimony in Opposition to: LD 208 "An Act to Eliminate the 72-hour Waiting Period on Firearm Purchases" LD 1230 "An Act to Abolish the 72-hour Waiting Period for a Gun Purchase"

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland and I serve on the board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I work as a Pediatric Hospitalist in Lewiston, and in the aftermath of the 2023 mass shooting, I also founded the group Maine Providers for Gun Safety. **Please accept this testimony in opposition to LD 208 and LD 1230.**

The Maine Chapter of the AAP is a professional organization representing 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists working together to further our mission *to improve the lives of children and adolescents in Maine*. Waiting periods are a prevention method for any impulsive act involving a firearm, including both firearm suicide as well as intentional gun violence. We know that in Maine, most gun deaths (upwards of 90%) are suicides, not homicides. Some may wonder why pediatricians feel the need to implement a waiting period for firearm purchases as a suicide prevention tool, when in Maine, you must be 18 years old to purchase a firearm.

Often, we think of suicide in terms of the singular life lost – and certainly that is the most identifiable and significant consequence. However, the impact of suicide on our pediatric community, especially the suicide of trusted adults in their lives, is significant. Experiencing suicide in the family and exposure to firearm violence are both independent adverse childhood experiences, which are correlated with long-term negative health consequences.

Suicide deaths by firearm are on the rise in Maine, as highlighted in the chart below. In 2021, 56% of those deaths involved a firearm.



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Waiting periods are an under-utilized, evidence-based strategy for reducing death and injuries by firearms. Waiting periods give law enforcement sufficient time to perform an accurate background check, and additionally create a “cooling off” period to prevent acts of violence or suicide attempts. States with such laws had 51% fewer firearm suicides than those without. Over 70% of Americans without a firearm in the home support longer waiting periods for gun purchases.²

We recognize that implementation of the waiting period passed last session has been paused pending litigation. Our belief is that this waiting period does not infringe upon the rights of responsible gun owners but rather *encourages* responsibility and ensures that the decision to purchase a firearm is made with careful consideration and full awareness of the potential risks. We urge the committee to vote **ought not to pass on LD 208 and LD 1230** and allow the courts to make their determination on the constitutionality of this life-saving provision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Anderson" followed by a stylized flourish.

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Founder, Maine Providers for Gun Safety

¹ Maine CDC Report to the Legislature pursuant to 22 MRS, Ch. 256-A § 1425

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The Maine Chapter of the AAP is a professional organization representing 300 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists working together to further our mission *to improve the lives of children and adolescents in Maine*. Maine Providers for Gun Safety is a coalition of over 500 physicians, PA's, NP's, and other healthcare professionals who came together following the Lewiston shooting to call for common sense gun safety legislation here in Maine.

In the shadow of Maine's deadliest mass shooting in history, the Maine legislature extended background checks to include the private sales of firearms. This change is supported by public health recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American College of Surgeons, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Public Health Association (among many others) which all indicate support for universal background checks on all firearm sales. If anything, we would encourage a further expansion of our background check requirements to also include non-advertised private party sales of firearms, rather than weakening the protections recently put in place.

The trafficking of firearms involves a highly efficient, organized, and profitable underground industry that moves guns from legal manufacture to dealers to criminals and others who are prohibited from purchasing guns through traditional means. Research has shown that background checks save lives. In states that require a background check for private handgun sales, there are 48% fewer firearm suicides, while the rates of suicide by other methods are nearly identical. Johns Hopkins University researchers found that the 2007 repeal of Missouri's background check requirement was associated with a 25% increase in the gun homicide rate. We also know that these policies have broad support: 88% of those surveyed in the US, including 85% of gun owners, favor universal background checks on sales of all weapons.¹

We urge the committee to vote **ought not to pass on LD 1062** and prevent firearms from getting into the wrong hands.

Sincerely,

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP

Advocacy Chair, Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Founder, Maine Providers for Gun Safety

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. Universal Background Checks for Gun Purchases. 2023 (<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/state-advocacy/universal-background-checks-for-gun-purchases/>).