

# Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians

Testimony of David Moltz, MD  
To the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary  
132nd Maine State Legislature  
April 16, 2025

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Dr. David Moltz, and I live in Portland, Maine. I am a physician and a psychiatrist, and I am here today representing the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, in opposition to LD 208 and LD 1230, as well as LD 1062. For the latter I refer you to my separate written testimony.

As a psychiatrist I am far too familiar with the problem of preventing suicide. The statistics have not changed: 87% of gun deaths in Maine are suicide, and 58% of suicide deaths in Maine are by gun<sup>1</sup>.

Impulsiveness plays a part in many suicide attempts. 24% of people who survived suicide attempts said that the time between when they made the decision to suicide and when they attempted it was less than five minutes<sup>2</sup>, and 74% said less than ten minutes<sup>3</sup>. In that brief time, if a gun is available it will be used, and when a gun is used, there is no chance for second thoughts.

This impulsivity is why it is so important that the legislature passed a law to mandate a 72-hour waiting period before a gun can be purchased. It allows a cooling-off period, time for the suicidal person to have second thoughts and to change their mind before acting. They still get to have their gun; they just have to wait a few days to get it. But those few days may mean the difference between life and death.

And waiting periods do save lives. A study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences<sup>4</sup> looked at states that implemented a waiting period, and found a reduction in suicide rates of between 7% and 11%, and a reduction in homicide rates of 17%.

On behalf of the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians I urge you to save lives by voting “not ought to pass” for LD 208 and LD1230, and for LD 1062.

David Moltz, MD  
Chair, Clinical Practice Committee  
Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians

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<sup>1</sup> Maine CDC report to the legislature, 2024. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11090>

<sup>2</sup> T. R. Simon, et al., “Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters,” *Suicide and LifeThreatening Behavior* 32 no. 1 (Suppl.) (2001): 49–59;

<sup>3</sup> Eberhard A. Deisenhammer, et al., “The Duration of the Suicidal Process: How Much Time is Left for Intervention Between Consideration and Accomplishment of a Suicide Attempt?,” *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 70, no. 1 (2008)

<sup>4</sup> Michael Luca, Deepak Malhotra, and Christopher Poliquin, “Handgun Waiting Periods Reduce Gun Deaths,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no.46 (2017): 12162–12165

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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, members of the Judiciary Committee, I am Dr. David Moltz, and I live in Portland, Maine. I am a physician and a psychiatrist, and I am here today representing the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians, in opposition to LD1062, An Act to Eliminate Background Checks for Private Sales of Firearms.

In a 2013 study published in the journal *Injury Prevention*<sup>1</sup>, the authors interviewed over 250 prison inmates whose crime involved firearms, asking how they obtained the firearm used in the crime. Only 20% of those who were legally entitled to buy a gun did it through licensed dealers. 80% used sources that did not require a background check. The authors surmise that this was to avoid tracing the gun to its owner. They state: “...**it is noteworthy how criminals avoid the regulated gun market of licensed sellers and prefer the largely unregulated market involving unlicensed sellers...**”

Criminals prefer unlicensed gun dealers. By requiring background checks for private sales, the legislature closed an important loophole, making it harder for criminals to obtain guns. Repealing that requirement would make it easier for them to do so. Why would we do that?

On behalf of the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians I urge you to vote “ought not pass” on this bill.

Thank you,

David Moltz, MD  
Chair, Clinical Practice Committee  
Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine A. Vittes, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, “Legal Status and Source of Offenders’ Firearms in States with the Least Stringent Criteria for Gun Ownership,” *Injury Prevention* 19, no. 1(2013): 26-31.