

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Betsy Williams, I live in Brunswick, and I am speaking today in opposition to LD 208, An Act to Eliminate the 72-hour Waiting Period on Firearms Purchases and LD 1062, An Act Eliminate Background Checks for Private Sales of Firearms.

As a member of the Maine State Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network, I always look at public policy through the lens of my values and principles.

Over the years, policy debates about guns have leaned heavily on principles of *fairness*—fairness to individuals who are responsible gun owners, and *individual rights*—the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. These principles—fairness and citizens' rights—are foundational to our democracy and essential to hold up when laws are enacted.

The debate about gun *safety*, however, misses the mark if it considers *only* these principles. At the center of the gun safety debate are the moral principles—foundational to world religions as well as democracy—of compassion, love of neighbor, and pursuit of the common good. The essential question of the gun safety debate is: How can we prevent our citizenry from harming themselves and each other?

These two gun safety bills—along with others you will hear this afternoon—provide measures of harm prevention: reducing the number of impulsive gun purchases by imposing a modest wait period and requiring background checks on all private gun sales.

These bills are preventative, *not* punitive. They respect Maine's long history of responsible gun ownership while confronting the reality that the proliferation of guns, the availability of semi-automatic weapons, and an epidemic of gun violence has changed the calculus for safety regulations.

To borrow a phrase I heard recently “we are living in a moral moment”—in our state and in our nation. Many of the issues of the day ask: are we going to be an amoral society that turns a blind eye to moral principles? Or are we going to be a strong moral society that supports every effort to do the right thing—which, in the case of gun regulations, includes creating safe conditions for the purchase, use and storage of firearms.

Please do not turn away from our collective moral responsibility. Vote ONTP on LDs 208 and 1062. Thank you.