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Testimony Neither For Nor Against:

L.D. 1120 - An Act to Promote the Secure Storage of Firearms

L.D. 1299 - An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Rep. Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Margaret Groban. I live in South Portland. I recently retired after a 30+ year career as a federal prosecutor in Maine focusing on firearms and domestic violence and the intersection between the two. I served for years on Maine's Domestic Violence Homicide Review Panel. I am adjunct faculty at University of Maine School of Law where I co-teach a class on the Second Amendment and the Regulation of Firearms.

It is my extensive experience with firearm laws that leads me to submit comments on L.D.s 1120 and 1299. These proposed bills are gun violence prevention bills that seek to mitigate risks associated with the unsecured storage of firearms.

By way of background, Maine has no law requiring firearm owners to securely store their guns. It does have a child access prevention law, Title 17-A, MRSA, §554(1)(B-4), prohibiting a child's (under 16 years) access through criminal negligence to a loaded firearm that is then used in a prohibited way.

The limitations of the Child Access Prevention Law are addressed in L.D. 1120. It addresses storage of firearms to prevent access by older youth and prohibited persons while safeguarding parents' right to allow their children to access a firearm with permission. It requires storage of firearms in a locked container to prevent access by a prohibited person or minor. Illegal entry and self-defense are two exceptions to this law. These limitations address teen suicide and unsecured firearm thefts in Maine. The Maine CDC report for 2022 demonstrates that suicide is the most prevalent form of gun violence in the state. <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/11090>

L.D. 1299 provides a non-criminal deterrence to reduce handgun thefts by requiring safe storage in unoccupied vehicles. The rates of firearm thefts have grown exponentially. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-thefts-from-cars-the-largest-source-of-stolen-guns-2/> An analysis of "FBI crime data in 271 American cities, large and small, from 2020 found that guns stolen from vehicles have become the nation's largest source of stolen firearms — with an estimated 40,000 guns stolen from cars in those cities alone." Id. This bill serves to prevent gun thefts – which increase the likelihood that firearms are going to be used in a crime. <https://health.ucdavis.edu/news/headlines/how-firearms-move-from-legal-purchase-to-criminal-use-/2024/03>