

Maine gun safety COALITION

Maine Gun Safety Coalition Testimony in SUPPORT OF LD 1120 - An Act to Promote the Secure Storage of Firearms (Rep. Sayre) and LD 1299 - An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles (Sen. Talbot Ross)

Thank you Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee. My name is Nacole Palmer, and I serve as the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition, which represents thousands of advocates, parents, teachers, students, domestic violence survivors, veterans, mental health and health care professionals, those who have lost loved ones to gun violence, and other advocates for gun responsibility across Maine.

When we talk about gun violence, it's easy to make the mistake of thinking that that only refers to horrific acts of mass violence that rise to national headlines, like the tragedy in Lewiston in 2023. But the reality is gun violence is a public health crisis that exists in every community in Maine, every day. The safe storage bills before you today are intended to both crack down on gun theft and the number of crime guns on our streets, and help prevent illegal access by dangerous persons and the devastating consequences of access to firearms by children and teens.

Suicide is one of the quietest but most painful versions of gun violence, particularly when it takes a teenager, something that happens all too often in Maine. Maine currently has no law requiring firearm owners to securely store their guns, even when children or other prohibited persons are present.

Easy access to unsecured and unsafely stored firearms is a significant factor in teen suicide and school shootings. Between 70% and 90% of firearms used by minors in suicides and school shootings are found in the child's home or the home of a relative¹, having been left easily accessible to those kids. Given that 1 in 5 Maine high school students seriously consider suicide,² we can save the lives of Maine youth by passing LD 1120. We can prevent inevitable moments of crisis from becoming lifelong tragedies for Maine families by requiring guns to be securely stored in homes that have children and teens, and by getting help for our at-risk teens, rather than giving them easy access to deadly weapons.

For LD 1299, requiring handguns to be secured in locked hardside containers in unoccupied vehicles, is a common sense step that addresses a significant and growing problem in Maine. From 2016-2019, Maine averaged 897 thefts from motor vehicles per year³. Four years later,

¹ "Child Access Prevention & Safe Storage," GIFFORDS, last accessed April 15, 2025, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention-and-safe-storage/>.

² Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 2021

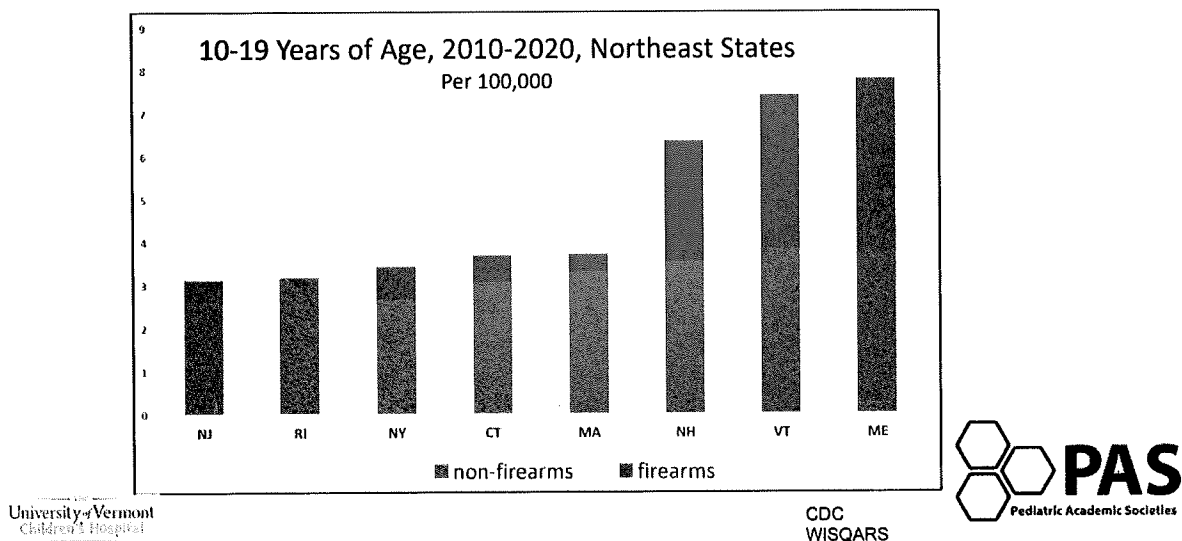
³ <https://www.maine.gov/dps/msp/about/maine-crime/2020>

that number had almost doubled to 1,450 thefts per year⁴. Guns stolen from cars go on to be used to facilitate drug trafficking and in other crimes that are wreaking havoc and devastation in our communities. By requiring the safe storage of handguns in unoccupied cars, we can make it harder for criminals and dangerous people to get their hands on weapons that they then later use to commit crimes in our communities. Stolen guns are, unsurprisingly, 9 times as likely to be used in crimes as guns that have been legally bought and sold⁵, and handguns stolen from cars are the largest source of stolen guns that are recovered at crime scenes⁶.

By promoting safe storage requirements and ensuring all guns, whether they're in the home or in a car, are stored safely and securely, we can keep guns out of the hands of children, preventing suicides, school shootings and other gun deaths, and we can crack down on gun trafficking and stem the flow of stolen guns into our Maine communities.

LD 1120 and 1299 will save lives and improve safety for kids, families, and law enforcement, and I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on both of these deserving bills.

Youth Suicide Death Rates



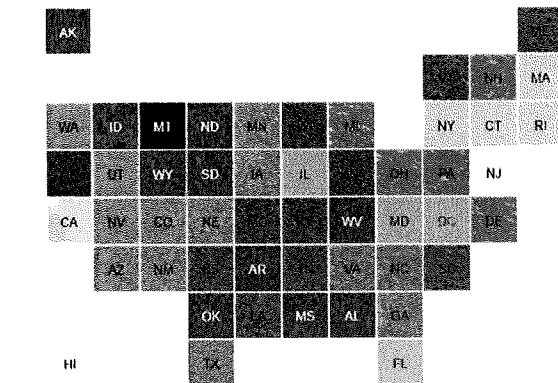
Graph 1: Youth Suicides Death Rates: non-firearm and firearm (2010-2020)

⁴ <https://learcat.bjs.ojp.gov/IncidentsCrime?Data+Year=2023&Unit+of+Analysis=Count&State=Maine>

⁵ <https://injepijournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-024-00491-8#Tab1>

⁶ <https://apnews.com/article/stolen-guns-cars-crime-fbi-data-66316ff1933dad8df984803fca377775>

Average Gun Ownership by State



Average proportion of adults living in a household with a firearm

Average Gun Ownership Rate per Household, 2007-2016

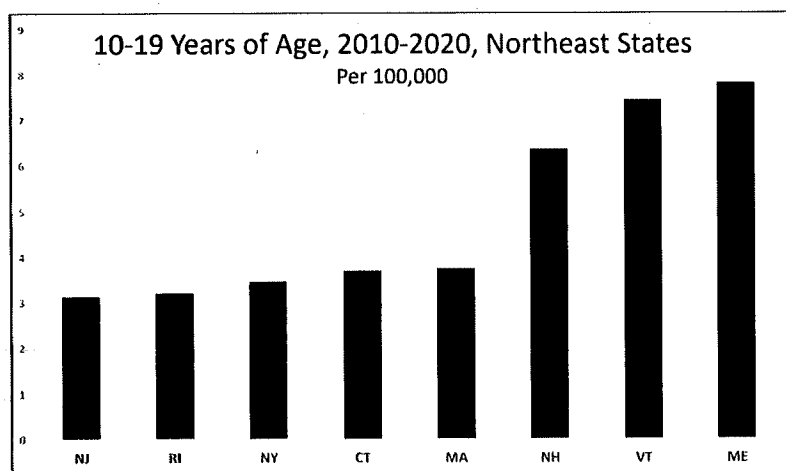


This figure displays mass estimated household gun ownership rates for each state for 2007 to 2016. Information on estimated standard errors for each state-year estimate is provided in the full data set.



Graph 2: Average Firearm Ownership by State (2007-2016)

Youth Suicide Death Rates



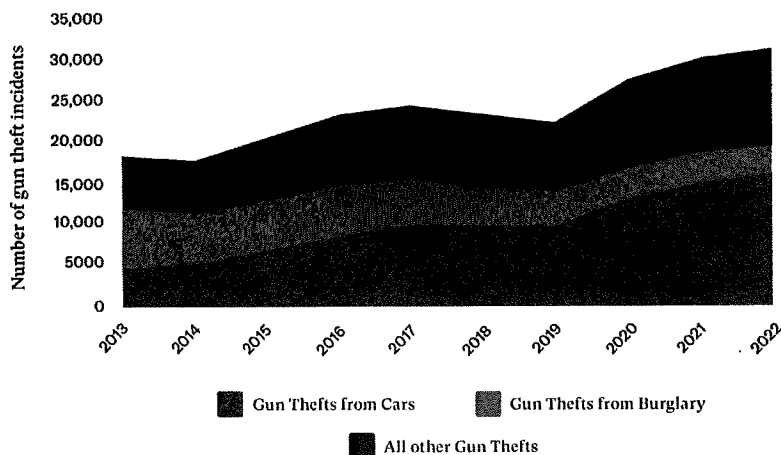
University of Vermont
Children's Hospital

CDC
WISQARS



Graph 3: Youth Suicide Death Rates by State (2010-2020)

A DECADE AGO, A QUARTER OF GUN THEFTS WERE FROM CARS. IN 2022, OVER HALF WERE.



Source: Everytown Research analysis of FBI NIBRS data of 159 cities, 2013-2022.

Chart 1: National Firearm Theft Rate (2013-2022)⁷

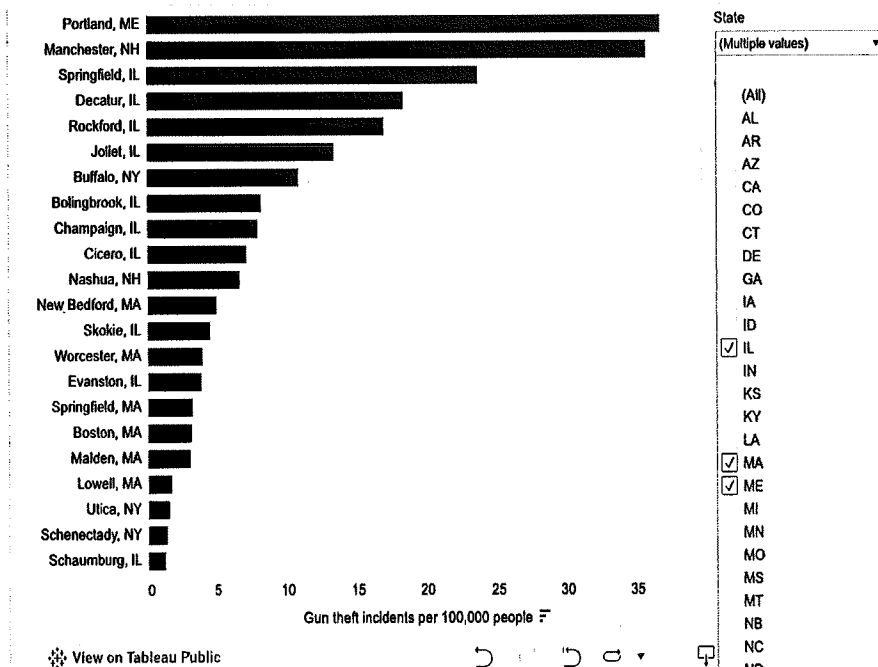


Chart 2: Firearm Theft from Vehicle Incidents per 100,000 people by City (2022)⁸

⁷ EveryTown Analysis of FBI NIBRS data, Last Accessed April 16, 2025, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-thefts-from-cars-the-largest-source-of-stolen-guns-2/>

⁸ EveryTown Analysis of FBI NIBRS data, Last Accessed April 16, 2025, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-thefts-from-cars-the-largest-source-of-stolen-guns-2/>

Total N (Crude Death Rate)	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total firearm deaths	3342 (4.1)	3390 (4.2)	4368 (5.4)	4752 (5.8)
Intent				
Homicide	1831 (2.2)	2023 (2.5)	2811 (3.5)	3057 (3.7)
Suicide	1297 (1.6)	1167 (1.4)	1293 (1.6)	1421 (1.7)
Unintentional	116 (0.1)	117 (0.1)	149 (0.2)	168 (0.2)
Undetermined/other	98 (0.1)	83 (0.1)	115 (0.1)	106 (0.1)
Age				
0-4 y	91 (0.6)	86 (0.4)	135 (0.7)	153 (0.8)
5-9 y	70 (0.3)	82 (0.4)	122 (0.6)	138 (0.7)
10-14 y	367 (1.8)	342 (1.6)	494 (2.4)	534 (2.5)
15-19 y	2807 (13.3)	2880 (13.7)	3617 (17.3)	3927 (18.2)

Chart 3: Baseline Characteristics Among Pediatric Firearm Mortalities⁹

⁹ "Trends and Disparities in Firearm Deaths Among Children," American Academy of Pediatrics, Last Accessed April 16, 2025
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/152/3/e2023061296/193711/Trends-and-Disparities-in-Firearm-Deaths-Among?autologincheck=redirected>