

**Testimony of Kathryn Fleisher, MPH, Policy Advisor at the Johns Hopkins Center
for Gun Violence Solutions, testifying in personal capacity**

**In Support & Recommend Ought to Pass – LD 1299 – An Act to Prohibit the
Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles**

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Good afternoon and thank you, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the committee, for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Kathryn Fleisher, MPH, and I am a Policy Advisor at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. I am testifying today in my personal capacity and my testimony does not represent the views or positions of the Center or of Johns Hopkins University.

As a public health professional, I know the importance of using nonpartisan, evidence-based policymaking processes to identify and adopt solutions to prevent violence before it occurs. LD 1299 - An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles, is one of those evidence-based policies designed to save lives. As a public health professional, I urge you to vote “ought to pass” on this commonsense and likely lifesaving bill.

LD 1299 prohibits a person from intentionally or knowingly storing a handgun in an unoccupied motor vehicle unless the handgun is stored out of plain view in a locked hard-sided container and the motor vehicle is locked. This is a basic firearm safety practice recommended by professionals.¹ Much like responsible firearm storage practices in the home, properly securing firearms in vehicles plays a crucial role in preventing theft and unauthorized use.² On average, at least one gun is

¹ Carey, T., Fleisher, K., McCourt, A., Hoops, K., & Crifasi, C.K.. "Safe Storage Model Policy Guide." Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2025). <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-03/JHU-CGVS-Safe-StorageModel-Policy-Guide-2025.pdf>

² "Gun Thefts from Cars: The Largest Source of Stolen Guns" Everytown Research & Policy. 2024. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-thefts-from-cars-the-largest-source-of-stolen-guns-2/>

stolen from a car every nine minutes in the United States,³ and the rate of gun thefts from cars has tripled from 2013–2023.⁴ This puts not only the gun owner but the whole community at increased risk of violence, as stolen firearms are attractive to illegal markets, where they can be sold to people who cannot legally purchase firearms, including those with histories of violent acts.

The rate of firearm thefts from cars in Maine has likely followed the same concerning trajectory, but that data is not captured by the Maine State Police or other state agencies. However, stolen firearms remain a pressing public safety issue in Maine and a mechanism is needed to improve secure firearm storage practices in cars to prevent theft.⁵ Storing a firearm in a locked, hard-sided container out of plain sight minimizes the likelihood that it could be accessed by an unauthorized user or stolen from the vehicle. Gun thefts from cars are, in fact, the largest single source of stolen guns.⁶ Critically, stolen firearms have nine times the likelihood of being used in crimes as opposed to firearms that are legally bought and sold.⁷ Thus, safe and secure firearm storage in vehicles can help stop the flow of crime guns and protect Maine communities.

Keeping the firearm and its storage container out of plain sight also decreases crimes of opportunity in which an individual might break into a vehicle solely to obtain a visible firearm. Though these storage requirements are an important step towards adopting robust safe storage laws, the committee might also consider future steps to compliment this bill, such as requiring that the locked hard-sided container be permanently affixed to the vehicle. In the meantime, this intermediate and commonsense policy is critically needed. Other states are facing these challenges as well, and as of April 2025, five states—CA, CO, DE, HI, and NY—

³ Everytown Research analysis of FBI NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System) data from 337 cities, 2022, and ACS population data, 2022, accessed January 2024.

⁴ Hemenway, D., Azrael, D. & Miller, M. "Whose guns are stolen? The epidemiology of Gun theft victims." *Journal of Injury Epidemiology* (2017). <https://injepjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-017-0109-8>

⁵ "Portland police say they are seeing rise in guns stolen from vehicles." WGME Portland. 2023. [Portland police say they are seeing rise in guns stolen from vehicles](https://www.wgme.com/story/news/crime/2023/04/12/portland-police-say-they-are-seeing-rise-in-guns-stolen-from-vehicles/)

⁶ "Guns are being stolen from cars at triple the rate they were 10 years ago, a report finds." AP News. 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/stolen-guns-cars-crime-fbi-data-66316ff1933dad8df984803fca377775>

⁷ Robinson, S.L., McCort, C.D., Smirniotis, C. et al. "Purchaser, firearm, and retailer characteristics associated with crime gun recovery: a longitudinal analysis of firearms sold in California from 1996 to 2021." *Journal of Injury Epidemiology* (2024). <https://injepjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-024-00491-8#citeas>

plus DC, require firearms to be safely stored in motor vehicles. Maine can help lead the way on this lifesaving policy approach by passing LD 1299.

Thank you for your time and consideration and I urge you to follow the data and proactively prevent gun violence in the great state of Maine by voting “ought to pass” on LD 1299 - An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles.