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Testimony of Representative Vicki Doudera presenting

LD 1104, An Act to Limit the Liability of Persons Who Provide Firearm Hold Agreements

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Vicki Doudera and I represent House District 41, Camden and Rockport. I am here before you today to present **LD 1104, An Act to Limit the Liability of Persons Who Provide Firearm Hold Agreements**.

As many of you know, I have been a Maine Realtor™ since 2003 and over the course of my career have had to advise sellers on how best to present their homes to potential buyers. Many times I have suggested that items be removed from the premises prior to listing, and number one on that list of items are firearms.

A few times this has created a dilemma for the seller who does not have a secure place to store weapons outside the home. Firearm hold agreements, such as what LD 1104 outlines, can solve this problem. They are designed to provide a safe and temporary solution for managing firearms in a variety of situations: a time when strangers will be touring bedrooms and opening cabinets, such as when a home is listed for sale; a period when inquisitive grandchildren will be visiting from out of state; or a time of upheaval, such as a divorce. All of these are situations when removing firearms from a home might be a good idea.

A year or two ago, I spoke to a gun shop owner in Lewiston who said he wanted to provide this service for customers but was concerned about his liability. This bill solves that dilemma by providing immunity to the holder of a firearm, in accordance with a firearm hold agreement, who returns the firearm to the owner at the close of the agreed upon loan period.

As written, I believe this bill is too vague and I prefer much of the language in my colleague Representative Wood's version, which you will also hear today. I like that his bill, LD 1174, specifies that it would be gun shop owners who would be holding the firearms, and I also like the process outlined for the Department of Public Safety to create the firearm hold agreements.

However, LD 1174 limits the people who may take advantage of these agreements to veterans and emergency responders – probably because these groups are disproportionately affected by the major public health challenge that is firearm suicide. I applaud the sponsor for realizing that firearm hold agreements can perhaps be lifelines for those at risk of harming themselves, but I would argue that allowing the general populace to avail themselves of secure storage is beneficial as well.

In closing, I will repeat what I have often said before this committee when introducing gun safety legislation: the problem of gun violence in our state is a complex one, requiring creative solutions on many fronts. Firearm hold agreements are one such solution that can help our fellow Mainers and hopefully save lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.