

# Maine gun safety COALITION

*Maine Gun Safety Coalition Testimony in OPPOSITION TO LD 208 - An Act to Eliminate the 72-hour Waiting Period on Firearm Purchases (Rep. Faulkingham), LD 1062 - An Act to Eliminate Background Checks for Private Sales of Firearms (Rep. Poirier), and LD 1230 - An Act to Abolish the 72-hour Waiting Period for a Gun Purchase (Rep. Chapman)*

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, representing 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.

Last year this body took critical action in the aftermath of the tragedy in Lewiston by passing two common-sense gun safety policies to save lives – background checks for all advertised gun sales, and a 72-hour waiting period for purchases. There was, and remains, much more work to be done, but these policies are two of the most basic tools in our toolbox to reduce crime and save lives.

A domestic abuser or convicted felon shouldn't be able to walk into a gun show and purchase a handgun without a background check. Background checks are proven to save lives – states with background checks on all handgun sales see lower firearm homicide rates,<sup>1</sup> lower firearm suicide rates,<sup>2</sup> and lower firearm trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, we know that 72-hour waiting periods are a critical policy that help reduce violent crime and save lives, particularly lives lost to suicide by firearm,<sup>4</sup> which is currently the cause of 90% of Maine's gun deaths.<sup>5</sup> Countless studies have found that most suicide survivors only contemplated their actions for extremely brief periods before making a suicide attempt<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Siegel and Claire Boine, What Are the Most Effective Policies in Reducing Gun Homicides? Rockefeller Institute of Government, March 2019, <https://rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/3-28-19-Firearm-Laws-Homicide-Deaths-Brief.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Eric W. Fleegler et al., "Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States," JAMA Internal Medicine 173, no. 9 (2013): 732–40, <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.1286>.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, and Maria T. Bulzacchelli, "Effects of State-Level Firearm Seller Accountability Policies on Firearm Trafficking," Journal of Urban Health 86, no. 4 (July 2009): 525–37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-009-9351-x>; Daniel W. Webster et al., "Preventing the Diversion of Guns to Criminals Through Effective Firearm Sales Laws," in Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013): 109-21, <https://bit.ly/3lc334l>.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Luca, Deepak Malhotra, and Christopher Poliquin, "Handgun Waiting Periods Reduce Gun Deaths," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 114, no. 46 (2017): 12162–12165.

<sup>5</sup> Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Maine DHHS, Feb. 2023, <https://legislature.maine.gov/doc/9742>.

<sup>6</sup> Eberhard A. Deisenhammer, et al., "The Duration of the Suicidal Process: How Much Time is Left for Intervention Between Consideration and Accomplishment of a Suicide Attempt?," The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry 70, no. 1 (2008); T. R. Simon, et al., "Characteristics of Impulsive Suicide Attempts and Attempters," Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior 32 no. 1 (Suppl.) (2001): 49–59; Catherine W. Barber and Matthew J. Miller, "Reducing a Suicidal Person's Access to Lethal Means of Suicide: A Research Agenda," American Journal of Preventive Medicine 47, no. 3 (2014): S264–S272. See also, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Means Matter, "Impulsivity and Crises," <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/impulsivity>.

Similarly, studies suggest that factors like rage that lead to firearm violence against others, including partners, can be short-lived<sup>7</sup>. Waiting period laws are successfully used in many states, including Maine, to provide a brief cooling-off period that can prevent a single moment of crisis from becoming a life-ending tragedy.

Mainers overwhelmingly support these common-sense laws (by a ratio of 4 to 1, or more), yet less than a year after they were enacted the gun lobby is already fighting to roll back what progress we've made since Lewiston. They've sued to try and repeal this progress in the courts, and are now trying to use the legislative process. It's out of touch with Maine communities who want to prevent future tragedies in our state and out of step with the majority of Mainers, including the majority of gun owners, who believe gun rights come with responsibilities. We urge you to reject this cynical attempt by the gun lobby to roll back these foundational gun safety policies. Please, vote Ought Not To Pass on LD's 208, 1230, and 1062.

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<sup>7</sup> J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, and H. H. Goldsmith, "The Role of Affect in Decision Making," *Handbook of Affective Sciences* (2003): 619–642. See also, e.g., David Card and Gordon B. Dahl, "Family Violence and Football: The Effect of Unexpected Emotional Cues on Violent Behavior," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126, no. 1 (2011): 103–143.

# Poll: Mainers want Background Checks & 72 Hour Waiting Periods

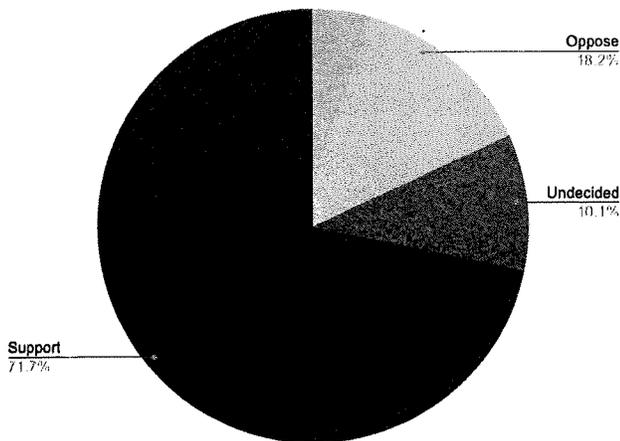
## Overview

New poll shows broad support among Mainers for the Maine legislature to pass universal background checks and 72 hour waiting periods. The poll was conducted among 799 registered Maine voters. It was conducted by Pan Atlantic Research and released in June 2023, and it shows that four times as many Mainers support background checks as oppose them. 72 hour waiting periods garnered even more relative support, with nearly five times as many Mainers supporting them as opposing them. Among Republicans, gun owners, and in the most conservative districts, support for these gun safety measures is, at minimum, twice that of opposition, and in most cases considerably higher.

## Poll Results

Poll: Pan Atlantic Research, June 2023

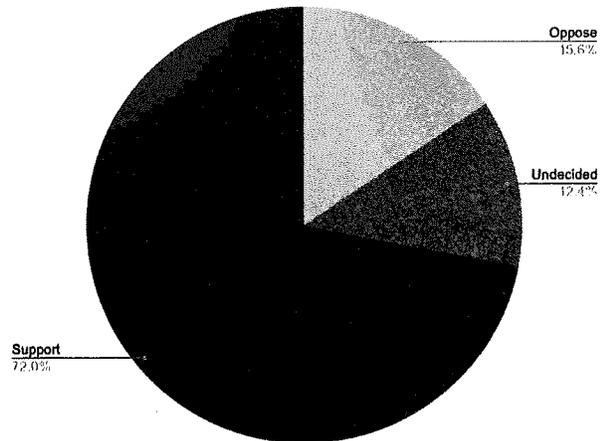
Background Checks - Poll: Maine (All)



### Background Checks

**Mainers Support: 72%**  
**Mainers Oppose: 18%**  
**Mainers Undecided: 10%**

72 Hour Waiting Period - Poll: Maine (All)



### 72 Hour Waiting Periods

**Mainers Support: 72%**  
**Mainers Oppose: 16%**  
**Mainers Undecided: 12%**