

## **Testimony in Favor of Retaining Current Laws that Improve Gun Safety and Public Health: Background Checks and 72 Hour Waiting Periods**

Chairpersons Senator Carney and Representative Kuhn and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Roy Hitchings and I live Camden Maine 04843

I am testifying in favor of retaining two key gun safety laws that we passed last year: background checks on all gun sales; and 72 hour waiting periods.

I have lived in Camden Maine for the last 25 years. I served in the US Army in Vietnam and trained on and fired many guns during my military service including: the M-16, M-60 machine gun, 50 caliber machine gun and 45 caliber pistol. Given that background, I am familiar with guns and understand their lethality.

I believe, and many studies confirm this, that background checks on all gun sales and 72 hour waiting periods reduce deaths. They make it harder for "the bad guys" to obtain deadly guns. Many folks seem to believe the myth that "only bad guys" kill people. But we know that most homicides in Maine involving guns are perpetrated by people we thought were "the good guys". A few examples include: suicides, domestic abuse, road rage and victims of bullying or perceived slights. Some level of good and evil exist in all of us because we are imperfect creations and we get mad, lose our temper and act out.

However, if there is a cooling down period like the 72-hour waiting period, many of those feelings could dissipate, and we will not buy a gun and kill someone else or ourselves. Immediate access to a deadly weapon like a gun increases the chance of a fatality of your depressed grandson or your daughter, whose domestic partner is harassing her. Requiring a 72-hour period between the purchase and possession of a gun, might enable someone to get the mental health care they need, or to implement an extreme risk protection order or to simply de-escalate their anger. Extending background checks to private transactions at gun shows and sales via publications like Uncle Henry's reduces the chance that "the bad guys" will obtain a gun.

I believe that Maine needs to reset the balance between individual rights and the "common good" and public safety. How much of a burden is it to ask someone buying a deadly weapon like a gun to undergo a background check and wait 72 hours? How do you compare that minor inconvenience with potentially saving a life? Would it be worth it if it saved your child's life?

Background checks on all gun sales and 72 hour waiting periods will certainly not stop all gun violence. However, they could stop **some**. 72% of Mainers support background checks and 72 hour waiting periods according to a June 2023 poll conducted by Pan Atlantic Research. Please do the right thing and vote to retain these laws, that were just enacted last year, and that make Maine safer. Thank you.