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Testimony of Representative Holly B. Stover presenting

LD 1379, An Act to Require Public Health Warnings on Firearms

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary, I am Holly Stover. I am honored to represent House District 48. Thank you for the opportunity to present **LD 1379, An Act to Require Public Health Warnings on Firearms**.

This bill addresses an urgent public health issue that affects communities across Maine. Firearms are a deeply rooted part of our state's culture and history, but they also pose serious, well-documented risks—particularly in homes affected by domestic violence, mental illness, substance use, or where firearms are left unsecured.

Maine has the highest rate of firearm suicide in New England. Studies show that the presence of a gun in the home increases the risk of suicide substantially, as well as the risk of fatal domestic violence, especially against women. These numbers are not just statistics. They represent our neighbors, veterans, friends and children.

LD 1379 proposes a straightforward, evidence-based intervention modeled after successful legislation in the state of New York. It would:

- Require licensed firearm dealers and gunsmiths to display clear and visible warning signs at their place of business;
- Mandate the distribution of brochures to purchasers that include information about suicide prevention, safe storage practices and domestic violence support services;
- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to create and disseminate standardized, accurate materials in consultation with firearm dealers and public health advocates; and,
- Apply modest penalties only after repeated noncompliance, prioritizing education and collaboration over punishment.

This is not a ban. It is not a restriction on lawful firearm ownership. Rather, it is a public health strategy rooted in awareness and prevention—similar to what we’ve done for decades with tobacco, alcohol and opioids.

Skeptics once questioned the effectiveness of warning labels on cigarette packs and alcohol bottles. Yet, over time, those labels have proven to influence behavior and raise awareness about the risks of consumption. LD 1379 follows that same proven model—meeting people at the point of sale and providing information that can prevent harm.

While warning labels alone will not solve the crisis of suicide, domestic violence or accidental deaths of children, they are an essential part of a comprehensive approach to promoting responsible and informed gun ownership. There are skeptics about this bill that will say this is unnecessary, but I encourage the committee to think about the impact other public health strategies have had on influencing behavior and move this forward in hopes of having an impact on the thoughts or actions of someone.

The most recent U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, has publicly supported the use of warning labels on firearms and ammunition. His endorsement underscores the value of this approach as part of a broader strategy to reduce preventable injuries and deaths.

LD 1379 is a commonsense measure that empowers Mainers with life-saving information. It honors our state’s values of personal responsibility and public safety, and it gives us one more tool to reduce avoidable tragedies in our homes and communities.

I respectfully urge you to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you for your time and for your continued commitment to the health and safety of all Mainers. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.