



Gun Owners of Maine

**"Every citizen has a right to keep and bear arms,
and this right shall never be questioned."**

Maine State Constitution - Article 1, Section 16

www.gunownersofmaine.org

Regarding:

LD 525: An Act to Strengthen Maine Citizens' Second Amendment Rights by Allowing the Discharge of Firearms on Private Property That Is Within 500 Feet of School Property in Certain Circumstances

LD 885: An Act to Allow Certain Persons with a Permit to Carry Concealed Handguns to Possess or Discharge a Firearm on School Property

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, Members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:

My name is Laura Whitcomb, Sidney. I am the President of Gun Owners of Maine and am submitting testimony on behalf of our Board of Directors and our members.

We stand together in full support of LD's 525 and 885, because we know that Gun Free Zones of any type do nothing to keep Maine's children safe. In fact, most "mass shootings" occur in areas where firearms are restricted.

Regarding LD 885: All Maine residents who have a permit to carry a concealed handgun have undergone training and background checks. Their addition to a school zone would increase the safety of Maine's school children attending school by decreasing the response time of armed help in the case of an active shooter.

Regarding LD 525: The language of the proposed bill is important. I would call your attention to the misguided language in the Maine Principal's Association testimony in opposition to this important bill. Responsible gun owners who have property adjacent to a school zone should not be forced, in a life-or-death situation, to consider such proximity should they be required to defend themselves or their property. It is incumbent upon all who utilize a firearm in this manner to be sure of their target, and we have laws, already enacted, that carry consequences for cases of negligent discharge.

This proposal is not asking for such property owners to be allowed to commence target practice in their backyards, it is simply asking that an added defense be given to those who must discharge a firearm in a defensive posture.

Secondly, it is a bold assertion to state that property owners who purchase property adjacent to a school zone must forfeit their inherent rights, that they did so knowingly (many schools are built next to existing homes), or as though that should somehow force them to give up their inherent rights should the need arise. It also clearly outlines the issues with the boundary of "Gun Free Zones", as a property

owner may have one portion of their property that falls within the 500-foot guideline, and another that is perfectly acceptable to discharge a firearm for any reason.

We would be amenable to the committee amending the bill as suggested in the testimony of the Criminal Law Advisory Commission (CLAC) to add "It is a defense to a violation of this section premised on discharge of a firearm that the person was acting pursuant to Title 17-A, section 104, subsection 3." In other words, it is only an allowed discharge if the person was acting in defense of self or property.

LD 525 is a common sense solution to balancing the interest of all parties.

I welcome any questions you may have, and would be happy to provide any required information for the work session.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Laura B. Whitcomb, President
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