

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and esteemed members of the committee.

My name is Mary Louise Bates, and I live in Falmouth. I respectfully testify in support of LD 1378: An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order.

This issue is personal for me for several reasons. On April 18, 2023, I pulled off 295 at Exit 17 to take a call from the hospital about my mother at the exact time the man just released from prison was firing at random vehicles there. I was lucky and others weren't. My daughter teaches at South Portland High School and my two grandsons attend Falmouth Schools, so their safety is of paramount importance to me. As a physician I also see doing anything we can to prevent needless death from gunfire as a critical public health measure.

An ERPO or red flag law has been used in other states to remove access to firearms from people who threatened school shootings. This law would allow family members, who may be the first to know a loved one is in crisis, to directly petition the court to have firearms temporarily removed. ERPOs have also been proven to reduce suicide, the leading cause of gun death in Maine. Enacting this ERPO makes good, common sense and preserves all the due process protections contained in Maine's current law. Removing access to guns from mentally unstable people does not infringe on the 2nd amendment rights of responsible gun owners.

In closing, we all want our schools and our communities to be as safe as possible. This legislation will take an important step toward that safety.

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