



June 11, 2025

Testimony before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary in **support of**
LD 1378: An Act to Protect Maine Communities by Enacting the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Committee:

I am Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, a coalition of seven Protestant denominations with more than 400 congregations and over 50,000 parishioners in Maine. The Council urges you to vote **OUGHT TO PASS** on LD 1378.

Clergy in Maine's churches respond to firearm suicides in their congregations with horrifying regularity. I know firsthand. Several years ago, I had to help a member of the church I was serving clean her husband's blood from their living room walls where he had shot himself the night before. In another congregation, I officiated at not one but two funerals for parishioners who committed suicide with a gun. My story isn't unique-- every pastor I know has had to respond to families who have lost a loved one to a self-inflicted gunshot.

Sometime in the last few days, somewhere in Maine, another clergy person was called to the home of another person who used a gun to take his own life. In one week's time, clergy will have been called to three more homes where three more Mainers died by firearm suicide. And two or three more every single week after that.

Unless our state finally enacts a law allowing Extreme Risk Protection Orders the way 21 other states have, including Connecticut where the firearm suicide rate has dropped by 14% since they enacted an ERPO law. Here in Maine, that would translate to saving twenty lives every year.

Our faith unites our council's members in the belief that every person is a beloved child of God with inherent worth and infinite value. We take seriously the biblical mandate to love our neighbors and to respond with compassion to human suffering. For us, reducing gun violence is a profoundly *spiritual* concern. A church that did nothing in the face of suffering like what I've just described wouldn't be worthy of the name.

But we are worthy of the name and we are doing something—we're standing before you today, asking you to imagine that the families, friends, and pastors of the 147 Mainers who died by firearm suicide last year are standing here asking you—begging you—to do the right thing, the moral thing. For them, and for those whose lives it would save, **PLEASE VOTE "OUGHT TO PASS" ON LD 1378.**

*Episcopal Diocese of Maine, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA),
Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church*