

Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn and esteemed members of this committee  
My name is Michelle Roelofs Lesperance, I am a retired elementary school teacher who currently lives in Portland, Maine

Safe Schools/ Safe Communities initiative is an important step to protecting and strengthening Mainers lives everywhere.

Therefore I am here to testify in support of LD 1378- a move to enact the Extreme Risk Protection Order Act

I have had first hand experience with someone close who experienced a distorted thinking crisis- and I have spent time afraid for my family's safety as well as the family member who was in crisis.

More than 50 yrs ago my uncle lost all touch with reality we spent 2 days and sleepless nights sheltering my grandmother as my uncle raged on next door- not knowing we were hiding in the neighbors house- hearing his shouts, and praying he would not find his brothers hunting guns or- leave the house and hurt someone else.

The police in the small town were more than aware- and tried to help- but unless there was a "direct threat of harm to himself or others" they were helpless.

It is a big step as a family member to make that call, and even bigger step to push through the mazes to try to get help.

Years later I found myself with a sickened stomach and heavy heart as I read of the Lewiston's Shooting and their family attempts to get help. The "yellow flag law" was not enough, and is not enough.

Family members are often the first to know when a loved one is in crisis and they need to be heard. Police need to be able to step in to temporarily remove someones access to dangerous weapons before tragedies occur.

Firearms are the leading cause of death for American children and teens. As a teacher and mother this also sickens my stomach. Extreme risk laws have been used to disarm people who have threatened mass shootings. And they have been proven to reduce suicide- leading cause of gun death in Maine.

As a teacher who sadly had add shooter drills to fire drills to my Kindergarteners each year, I am begging you to support this asap.