

# **Maine gun safety COALITION**

Thank you. Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Nacole Palmer, and I serve as the executive director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition, a coalition of thousands of advocates, families of those lost to gun tragedies, parents, teachers, domestic violence survivors, veterans, gun owners, mental health and health care professionals, and other advocates for gun responsibility in Maine.

I'm here before you today to represent them—along with 80,000 other Mainers who signed petitions to get an Extreme Risk Protection Order onto the ballot for us all to vote on this November—and impress on you the urgent need for Maine to join the 21 other states where this law has been used effectively to disarm people who threatened mass shootings, including school shootings, as well as prevent suicides by firearm, the leading cause of firearm death in Maine.

The facts are simple: Maine's current law, an outlier and the only one of its kind in the nation, was in place in 2023 and failed to prevent the horrific tragedy in Lewiston, despite multiple warning calls about the would-be shooter. Perhaps things could have been different if Maine had a real Extreme Risk Protection Order law for his family to be able to use.

Extreme Risk Protection Orders empower families to go directly to a court if a loved one is in crisis and may pose a threat to themselves or others. Using due process, the court may temporarily restrict someone's access to firearms. In fact, ERPOs follow the exact same due process protections that exist in Maine's current law, and law enforcement would still be able to initiate the process. Any claims to the contrary are false and not in good faith. ERPOs merely empower family members—often the first to notice if something is wrong—to get help when a loved one is in crisis and has access to firearms.

Not a month goes by that I don't receive a call, sometimes several, with someone on the other line begging for help because they're worried about someone they love hurting themselves or others with a gun. They tell me they've called the police and have been told someone will look into it, but nothing happens. I tell them there's nothing I can do to help beyond Maine's current law. Those calls flash back into my mind whenever I see a headline about a shooting or DV incident or suicide—I hold my breath until I'm certain it's not one of the calls I got.

There's nothing more I can do as an individual, but there's something we can all do together, this November, by passing this proven, life-saving law that empowers family members and will help keep our schools and communities safe. Thank you.