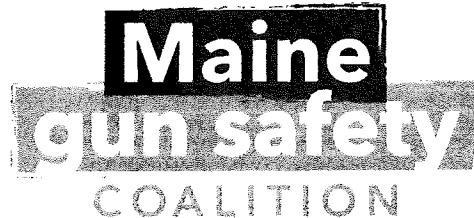


May 1, 2017



**Our Mission**

Maine Gun Safety Coalition promotes responsible gun ownership in order to create a safer Maine.

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Senator Langley, Representative Kornfield, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Nick Wilson and I am the Executive Director of the Maine Gun Safety Coalition. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition of LD 1370.

Maine has a long history of home rule and local control. Current law allows each community college and public university to write a firearms policy that works best for their community. For example, Orono allow students to check-in firearms with campus police if they want to hunt before or after class, while USM prohibits guns on campus at all times. It just so happens that every single public college in Maine recognizes that guns in classrooms will threaten public safety and the free exchange of ideas.

We believe it should continue to be left up to each individual college community in Maine to decide what is best for the safety and security of its students, staff, and faculty. A firearms policy that works for Orono may not work for Portland or Presque Isle, but the gun lobby in Augusta shouldn't get to dictate policies that threaten critical debate and open dialogue among students and faculty.

**Research shows that guns on college campuses will lead to increased gun violence - including accidents, suicides, domestic violence, and sexual assault.** Traditionally, college students start in their late teens. Compared to individuals in their mid-twenties, 18-year-olds are more impulsive, thrill-seeking, and vulnerable to negative influences such as peer pressure.

During these pivotal years, adolescents also typically begin experimenting with alcohol and drugs – both important risk factors for gun violence. According to multiple peer-reviewed studies by Harvard's Injury Control Research Center, college students who own firearms are more likely than their unarmed counterparts to binge drink, drive after binge drinking, to be arrested for driving under the influence, and damaging property after drinking.

When other states like Texas passed similar legislation, many professors either stopped teaching controversial topics, refused to hold office hours out of concern for their safety, or simply quit. Other states have also seen sharp increases in security and insurance costs after passing campus carry. Only two months after Idaho

adopted campus carry, a professor at Idaho State University unintentionally shot himself in the foot while teaching a class.

Concealed carry laws do not deter mass shootings. According to an FBI investigation of 160 active shooting incidents between 2000 and 2013, only one incident was stopped by a concealed carry permit holder – who was a well-trained Marine. As multiple law enforcement officers in Maine have told me, one of their worst nightmares is responding to an active shooter call and seeing multiple individuals with guns and not being able to recognize who is the “good guy with a gun” and the cold-blooded killer.

**College students are much more likely to commit suicide with a firearm than stop a mass shooting.** One in every ten college students has made a plan for ending their life and more than 1,000 individuals commit suicide every year on college campuses in the United States. Suicides attempted with a firearm are lethal 82.5% of the time, compared to less than 3% by drug overdose, the most commonly used method to attempt suicide. More than half of completed suicides in Maine are already by gun. Increasing the availability of firearms on college campuses will lead to more fatal suicides because when you use a gun, there are no second chances.

This campus carry measure is especially alarming because Maine no longer requires individuals to obtain a permit, pass a background check, or even demonstrate competency to handle a firearm. In Arkansas, in addition to a concealed-carry permit, individuals must complete an eight-hour “enhanced training” course in order to carry firearms on university grounds. **LD 1370 lacks basic safeguards included in many of the other 35 campus carry bills the gun lobby has submitted throughout the country so far this year.**

The current system is working well. During our several discussions on college campuses this year, we heard no complaints from students, faculty, administrators, or law enforcement about current firearm policies. This is a solution in search of a problem, and I’ve always been told that if it’s not broken, why fix it? Fortunately, we haven’t had any school shootings in recent memory, but if you increase the number of guns on campus, this won’t remain the case. I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1370 because each higher education community is best equipped to make these life and death decisions.