

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

Thank you for your attention to important public safety issues.

I am Chris Campbell, I live in Belfast, and I am a Professor emeritus at the University of Maine.

I am testifying for LD759 because I am a grandfather of three children who live in Maine. My grandchildren and all Maine youth are threatened by firearm mortality and suicide. These threats are increased by the unsafe storage of firearms in homes where children live and play.

LD 759 is a child access prevention (CAP) law that aims to increase the safety of Maine children by decreasing the availability of firearms in their homes.

In 2019 the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics published a study of the threat to children of unsafe gun storage. The full reference for this study is at the end of this testimony. The **objective** of this study was: “To estimate the reduction in youth firearm suicide and unintentional firearm mortality that would result if more adults in households with youth stored household guns locked.” The **results** of the study were that motivating firearm owners residing with children to lock all household firearms could prevent up to 32% of youth deaths depending upon the probability of motivating safe storage. The **conclusion** was that a “modest uptake of a straightforward safe storage recommendation-*lock all household firearms*-could result in meaningful reductions in firearm suicide and unintentional firearm fatalities among youth. Approaches that will motivate additional parents to store firearms safely are needed.”

If you trust your doctor, you follow her/his advice. I trust the recommendation of the American Medical Association Pediatrics for safe firearm storage in households with youths. Maine should pass a CAP law like LD759, as most other states, including all New England states other than Vermont, have done.

This is a reasonable, common sense gun law that will save lives. LD759 only takes effect after a child gets a loaded firearm, then uses it in a reckless or threatening manner, or in committing a crime, or by recklessly or negligently discharging the gun. This bill would not imperil responsible gun owners. Under this bill, no crime would be committed so long as the gun was locked, reasonably secured, or there was no expectation that a child would be present in the home. And LD759 is not overly broad. It’s similar to Maine’s car-seat-safety law. Actions are criminal only after injury or the threat of injury occurs.

Michael C. Monuteaux, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, “Association of Increased Safe Household Firearm Storage With Firearm Suicide and Unintentional Death Among US Youths,” *JAMA Pediatrics* (2019).