

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Nacole Palmer, and I live in Bowdoin. I have been an educator for almost two decades, and I am also a professional classical musician.

I speak to you today in support of LD 759.

Because I have attended two other hearings in recent weeks about gun safety bills, I am now familiar with the strategy of the NRA-influenced members of committees and the community and the NRA-paid lobbyists they usually invite to participate in work sessions on the bills. This strategy—of creating as much noise as possible around any bill designed to prevent loss of life by guns—has little to do with truth or integrity, and even less to do with protecting public safety.

So, to the members of this committee who care about both truth and children, I beg you: when the same people who LAST week claimed that we can't protect victims of death threats from gun violence because Maine is already the "safest state in the nation" but THIS week claim that dangerous intruders are likely to come in to Maine homes at any moment and so we "need" loaded guns within grasp of everybody (including the children), please know that they are feeding you this disingenuous garbage because a) the NRA has spent a lot of money to send you that message, b) the NRA wants to keep making money from feeding you that disingenuous garbage, and c) they are hoping you don't read the part of this bill that says that if you have the weapon on your person or within inches of your grasp (such that you could keep it away from the child), you will not be held liable under this bill. So in other words, the ability of adults to protect themselves is not in jeopardy from this bill. Not even a little bit.

What this bill does is join 29 other states who have enacted Safe Storage Bills, in recognition that the state must take action to protect children.

Protecting children, keeping children safe, is what this bill is about, and that is why you are seeing before you today so many people who have literally devoted their lives to protecting children. From pediatricians to law enforcement professionals, to so many teachers testifying today that I've lost count...the people who are advocating for this bill are the same ones whose sacrifices on behalf of children know no bounds, the same people who will put themselves between a disturbed teen who brought his father's weapons to school because they weren't locked up and their terrified students.

But they shouldn't have to do that. And YOU have the power to help prevent it. Please take this sensible, and constitutional, step that is proven to save lives before we lose even MORE Maine children to guns than we already have. Vote Ought to Pass on LD 759.

Thank you.