

LD 759 An Act to amend the child engagement laws to include certain unauthorised access to a loaded firearm

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify for LD 759. I am a resident of Rumford and my legislators are Rep. Josanne Dolloff and State Senator Lisa Kiem. A couple of towns over is Rep. Richard Pickett who I appreciate his service on this committee.

I am a retired high school guidance counselor and volunteer advocating for veterans through my membership of American Legion Auxiliary. I am the Rural Engagement Lead for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense and live in a gun owning home. I support the second amendment. With this background I am testifying for LD759.

The hardest my part of my job as a guidance counselor was losing students due firearm suicide. The young people who have died in the schools I have worked in and in my community have been honor roll students and from loving families. A crisis to them would be a crisis that we know as adults would resolve itself in time. It might have been a break up or not getting to their dream college. Whatever the case, what they did have in common was easy access to loaded and unlocked firearms. This is what allowed for a moment of impulsivity during a hard time to turn into tragedies. We must as a society do more to encourage safe storage. Maine has a long history of responsible gun ownership, safely storing firearms should be a hallmark of being a responsible gun owner. LD 759 will set this benchmark for our state.

Our military Veterans hold unique respect for firearms as they know the great responsibility that comes with firearm ownership. The Veterans Administration is working on encouraging veterans to make safe storage of firearms a priority. The video titled "Veterans Crisis Line: Firearms Safety" starts with "Many veterans are well versed in firearm safety but that doesn't mean their families are". Also promoting safe storage is the newly created Maine Safer Homes Taskforce. Amongst members are Maine CDC, Maine Bureau of Veterans services and VAMaine Healthcare System. The brochure has a section titled "Making My Home Safe" with descriptions of various locks and safes. Within Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, I meet monthly with other military family members and veterans who advocate for veterans to focus on the same training, safety and accountability that was part of their firearm standards during active duty.

Thank you for your time today and for your service to the state of Maine. I urge you to support LD 759.