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Porter

I am writing in opposition to LD 1138. This bill will not make Maine's citizens or communities safer, in fact, states that have adopted "Stand Your Ground" laws have seen a significant increase in firearm homicide rates.

But I would like to speak to the impact laws like this have on the disability community. People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Autism, communication disabilities, physical disabilities, neurological or psychiatric disabilities frequently communicate and behave in ways that are often misunderstood by people who are not familiar with them. Removing the legal duty to retreat means a misunderstanding of their behavior poses a serious threat to the safety and wellbeing of individuals with any of these disabilities.

I am the proud parent of two adult sons with developmental disabilities. One is 6 feet tall with a deep, loud voice. At times he can become overwhelmed and behave in a way that could easily be interpreted by someone who does not know him as dangerous. Under this bill, a bystander could "reasonably believe" that he is a threat to me or others and shoot him. Shoot him for simply existing in the community as a person with disabilities.

At least 25% of people shot by law enforcement have a disability. If trained officers cannot accurately interpret the behavior of people with disabilities, how can we expect someone with little to no training and little to no experience with people with disabilities to make a split-second judgement. A split-second judgement with permanent, devastating consequences.

LD 1138 would put my children at higher risk when they are in public in Maine. It is a restriction on their freedom.