

Camilla Shannon  
Yarmouth

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

My name is Cam Shannon. I live in Yarmouth. I am here today to speak against LD 1138: An Act to Ensure the Right to Self-defense Exists Outside the Home by Removing the Requirement to Retreat. This is a dangerous “Stand Your Ground” bill. If made law, it will have dangerous consequences for the people of our state. More Mainers will be injured and hospitalized. More Mainers will die from firearm homicides. And Mainers of color will disproportionately shoulder these terrible - and entirely avoidable - burdens.

“Stand Your Ground” laws encourage the escalation of violence by removing the duty to retreat. While Maine law currently allows citizens to defend themselves and others in public, they are required to retreat if they can do so safely instead of using deadly force. In other words, traditional self-defense law recognizes the importance of human life and demands the de-escalation of violence, whenever possible, to save lives.

This is not so in states with “stand your ground” laws. Instead, individuals in these states are encouraged to “shoot first and ask questions later”. Research from the nearly thirty “stand your ground” states shows that firearm homicide rates increased while, at the same time, states without “stand your ground” laws experienced a decrease in firearm homicides. According to Everytown for Gun Safety, these laws are, “associated with an increase in homicide rates translating to more than 150 additional gun deaths each month in the US overall.” That is the same as 1,800 American deaths each year.

And, according to the Giffords Law Center, stand your ground laws become exponentially more dangerous when coupled with weak concealed carry laws that allow large numbers of people to carry concealed weapons in public or without a license... just what we have in Maine.

All of this has me remembering a time when I was walking out to the car with my then-three-year-old daughter after her swim lesson at the Freeport YMCA. We were cold, wet, and tired. We barely paid attention to the two cars stopped in the middle of the parking lot. I wouldn't have given them a second thought, if one of the drivers hadn't angrily exited his vehicle. He was yelling. Swearing. Mad. His face was red. His chest puffed up. And he flew at the driver in the other car. It looked as though a fight was about to break out. Fortunately, another bystander was able to intervene and calm the situation. As I drove away, it looked as though all would turn out okay. But what if one of the men had been carrying a loaded gun? And what if Maine had already enacted a “Stand Your Ground” law? What then? I shudder to think.

Please protect Maine lives and vote “ought not to pass”.