

April 26, 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Donna Stevens, I am a resident of Bath, Maine, and I am writing today to stand in the strongest support of LD 1138, "An Act to Ensure the Right to Self-defense Exists outside the Home by Removing the Requirement to Retreat" and to ask that you do the same. This legislation is an affirmation of our human right to be secure in our persons against any violation of our bodies or property by legally permitting the use of deadly force to prevent death or serious bodily injury in defending ourselves or another, and to prevent forcible robbery, kidnapping, or sexual assault.

I have spent my entire working career in various jobs that required manual labor and now at 46 years old, while my job is no longer physically demanding, my body is showing the toll my former jobs have taken. With my currently treated medical conditions, my history suffering years of physical abuse with its own toll on my body, and my small stature of just over 5 feet, I am not a physical match for most people who would seek to do me harm and I am not physically able to "run" away from one who intends to harm to me. I could try but I would fail and then the damage to my person at the hands of an assailant would be multiplied. It doesn't seem reasonable that actions to prevent grievous harm to myself would be criminalized because I didn't retreat and chance a worse fate.

If someone outside my home would seek to do bodily harm to me, it isn't reasonable to expect that I turn my back on an assailant and try to flee. It is not physically possible that I can safely flee anywhere with the speed that such an encounter would require, even though it may seem to anyone else that I could. Even if I could flee, when required to retreat from dangerous situation I would have to turn my back on said assailant who is then given the advantage of being able to pursue me and maintain visual contact with me while they pursue, but I am disadvantaged in not being able to see what they are doing, such as whether they are gaining on me enough to use their body to knock me to the ground to assault me, or picking up a weapon to bash me over the head with. And if I were to try to "flee" the same situation by backing away so I can keep a visual on the assailant, then I am put in danger of tripping and falling and breaking my head open on the ground and/or being knocked unconscious which again gives an assailant the upper hand in that situation.

Requiring a "duty to retreat" empowers assailants with a personal safety that their intended victims are not afforded, and that is wrong on so many levels. People who are going about their lives and obeying the law should not be legally restrained from protecting themselves and others from grievous bodily injury.

Those criminals who seek to harm those people should certainly not be protected more than people who are respectful and abiding by the law. Criminals should not be empowered with more rights than law abiding people.

I respectfully ask you to show support for this bill and vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1138, "An Act to Ensure the Right to Self-defense Exists outside the Home by Removing the Requirement to Retreat".

Thank you for your time today, and for all your continued hard work to keep Maine the safest state in the nation and a wonderful place to live, raise a family, work, and do business.

Regards,
Donna Stevens

Donna Stevens
Bath

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