

Holly Travers  
Westbrook

“Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I am Holly Travers, and I live in Westbrook.

I write in opposition to LD1138: An Act to Ensure the Right to Self Defense Exists Outside the home by removing the requirement to retreat.

LD 1138 is a dangerous bill. Statistics show that homicides increase in states with Stand Your Ground laws. I think there is a huge mistaken assumption in this bill, namely that in moments of alarm we are able to correctly perceive threats to ourselves or others AND are justified in acting upon such perceptions.

I offer a case in point. Approximately 6 years ago, while at home, I looked out at my backyard. My neighbor's son and his two friends were in the neighbor's backyard, directly behind my home. To my alarm, they were taking turns pointing a gun right at my home and at other homes. They kept passing the gun and extending their arms as if to take aim. It was around mid-morning. I would have expected these teenagers to be in school. Besides being alarmed for myself, I feared they might be on their way to the nearby high school. There were a lot of reports of school shootings at that time. My fear of harm to myself or other's was real but was my perception of the threat correct?

I called the Westbrook police. An officer came and correctly perceived the situation. The three teenage boys had no intention of harming anyone and were fascinated with an air gun. They received information from the officer on how their actions were causing alarm.

My neighbor's son is now a senior at USM majoring in computer science. He is her only child. I am thankful that the police officer who responded knew how to approach the situation. We don't want ordinary citizens making life and death decisions in a moment of panic when a de-escalating alternative could have been taken. It is difficult enough for trained professionals to handle situations of threat. Reaching for a cell phone can look a lot like reaching for a gun to someone who feels they are in danger.

I don't think LD1138 leads to “law and order.” It leads to escalation of conflict, injury, death, and more gun sales. We left duels behind a long time ago. Why would we turn to a “True Man” law now?

Thanks for taking the time to read my testimony. Please think deeply about the effects of this bill.