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Geoff Bickford

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and the distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Geoff Bickford and I come before you today on behalf of the Maine gun safety coalition our board of directors and our thousands of supports in strong opposition to LDs 1052 and 1315.

Yet another refrain I hear hurled my way, and in the direction of my fellow-gun safety supporters is “this is a solution in search of a problem.” Well, when it comes to these two bills, I could not agree more. During our state of emergency last year at this time, gun sales in Maine went up 69%, and as you’ll hear about later, because of our porous background check laws, that’s just the sales we know about. No gun stores in Maine were closed, and no one’s ability to carry a firearm was restricted. If anything, the public emergency allowed gun sales, and gun culture in our state to thrive, while so many other aspects of our lives suffered greatly. But to raise the right to always buy a gun during a public emergency, no matter what, whenever you want it or need it, above every other right in this state, its nonsense, and its dangerous.

Governor Mills did not find the need in THIS emergency to restrict the ability to buy or sell a gun, but public emergency laws exist to respond to ANY type of emergency, those predicted and those unforeseen. We should not be in the business of tying the hands of future administrations trying ably to grapple with what will be unprecedented and serious conditions, and to save the lives of Mainers.

To make either of these bills law would be to make the following things essential in this state, unimpeachable during a public emergency: the ability to get food, the ability to go to a hospital, and the ability to buy and sell guns at any time and in any manner. Not work, not school, not church, not recreation, not non-essential travel. Guns, food, and medical care.

For some on the far fringes of gun culture that may sound exactly right to them, but I would hope to prudent, wise legislators, elected to serve all of Maine, and all of its residents, and to protect against potential future emergencies, this future hand-tying would come across for what it is: dangerous, unwarranted, and unwise. Please vote Ought Not to Pass on both LD 1052 and LD 1315.

Sincerely,

Geoff Bickford

Executive Director

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