



Elizabeth Conley-Lepene

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### Testimony on LD 1454: An Act To Prohibit Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms

Dearest Criminal Justice Committee, my name is Elizabeth Conley-Lepene. I hold a Bachelors Degree in Justice, with minors in both Advocacy and Psychology and have Founded a Nonprofit in the state of Maine, called Safe House, we are currently working on its National recognition. I come forward to voice my support of: LD 1454: “An Act To Prohibit Untraceable and Undetectable Firearms”, with firsthand knowledge. I want to thank you for taking your time to read my testimony in length and consider my concerns when making your decision.

Jeannine Lauber Oren, said “We are facing a pandemic”, when talking about the domestic violence women face today. She would be one hundred percent correct in that statement. According to the Violence Policy Center, “92 percent of women are not only murdered by a family member or someone they knew, but the most commonly used weapon, is a gun.” Time reports that “over 19,000 people were killed in firearm-related incident in 2020”. This global pandemic of femicide ends, by movements created in this room, such as the one we are asking you to support today.

I am 35 years old with two daughters, and I have a long list of women and children that I know were aggressively abused by men, it is devastating. What possibly could be more devastating than that? Knowing that she couldn’t escape, or she did, or tried and “he” took it too far. Maine has some famous cases, and for me, they are too close for comfort. They are not just a face on the news they are someone I went to school with, I worked with, or spent time roller skating with.

I went to high school with Dairen Richardson, we were not close friends, but her sister was in my class. I remember thinking they were both beautiful, friendly, smart and charismatic. I know you cannot hear or see it, I am emotional as I write this out, because I can’t even imagine as a parent, what it feels like to lose a daughter, to murder. I can however, share how it feels to lose a classmate. Darien lost such amazing potential, and it wreaked havoc on the spirit of South Portland High Schoolers that graduated

anywhere around 2002-2005, because she was a fellow “sister”. How could we possibly have faith in this world, if we cannot find the murderer and claim a sense of justice?

Dairen Richardson is not alone, there are stories of other classmates such as Ashley Ouellette, Megan Waterman, and Trista Reynold’s daughter, Alya Reyonlds, that all call for your support. While I cannot claim to know whether guns were used in the other cases, I do know that these 4 beautiful ladies, are no longer here, by some course of action that was beyond their control.

In my own situation, I was abused by my husband, and he got a gun off Craigslist, despite set bail conditions deterring him not to. There came a night, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015, in which he drank a 5<sup>th</sup> of vodka, and after aggressively assaulting me, he claimed, that he “was going to end it all”. As he charged toward the bedroom, he stopped quickly at the door, and I just sat there and watching; powerless. I knew, in that moment, I had no choice over my fate, and his course of action, would be beyond my control. Something in him, changed his mind, and he went outside. The police came, he resisted arrest, and tried to jump his handcuffs, but luckily, I am alive to write this testimony for you today.

It’s important that we as a nation, do our due diligence to not only bring these types of characters to justice, but to put Acts like LD1454 in place to prevent guns from getting in the wrong hands. The last issue I will leave you with is suicide, another grave pandemic we face in this world today. 61 percent of suicides involve the use of a gun, and it is the leading cause of gun deaths.

I would close by asking that you support LD1454, to stop the sale of untraceable and undetectable firearms.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Conley-Lepene

Safe House

Founder/President