



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN MAINE

Loring House

143 State Street Portland, ME 04101
207-772-1953 www.episcopalmaine.org

sent 5/3/21
[Signature]

May 3, 2021

Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, my name is John Hennessy and I represent the Episcopal Diocese of Maine. Today, I am offering testimony on behalf of **Episcopal Peace Fellowship in support** of LD 976, 999, and 1454.

We believe in a God of life in the face of death who calls our church to speak and act decisively against the unholy trinity of poverty, racism and violence. Our faith traditions, sacred texts and baptismal covenant all call on us to engage in peacemaking, and in actions that honor the worth and dignity of every human being. That is why we support these common-sense gun safety measures.

Bump stock devices by design allow a firearm to discharge more than one bullet with a single action and have the potential for devastating outcomes. While the federal ban on these heinous devices is in limbo, this bill amends the definition of machine gun to include a weapon to which a bump stock device is attached.

Background checks of purchasers of firearms for private sales at gun shows or private sales is solid public policy. The latest [Morning Consult/Politico survey](#) shows 84 percent of voters support requiring all gun purchasers to go through a background check – it's backed by more than 9 in 10 Democrats and 3 in 4 Republicans in the latest survey.

Finally, LD 1454 would prohibit the manufacture, import, sale, transfer, or possession of undetectable or untraceable firearms or "ghost guns". These include firearms assembled from kits or made with 3D printers, are untraceable by law enforcement and often undetectable by metal detectors. These guns pose a grave threat to public safety.

Mass shootings in the country declined in 2020, when pandemic restrictions limited gatherings, but it was still the deadliest year in decades for gun deaths. [More than 43,000 Americans were killed with guns](#) in murders and suicides. In the last several weeks, as COVID restrictions have lifted, mass shootings have returned, bringing unspeakable losses to families in Atlanta, Boulder, Los Angeles, South Carolina and Indianapolis, and [many other towns and cities](#), and everyday gun violence shows no signs of slowing.

[Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde](#), diocesan bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, said "It is only natural to wonder in our worst moments whether God has abandoned us. Yet the more compelling spiritual question isn't where God was, but rather where we were. For God has no

body on earth but ours. If we only pray and offer comfort now, and do not act, we are complicit in perpetuating the conditions that allow such atrocities to occur. It is time, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, to substitute courage for caution.”

Gun safety is a moral issue and we are stepping forward to embrace the moral imperative of preventing the continuing tragedy of gun violence. We will not sit on the sidelines from this conversation. This is a conversation for the wellbeing of our family. The people of faith will not be silent. Every life is precious and sacred and that each person bears the image of God.

We believe Maine can and should take some preemptive actions to quell gun violence in ways that do not infringe on the Second Amendment. Please support LD 976, 999, and 1454.