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Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Joe Anderson. I am a resident of Portland, a hospital-based pediatrician, and I sit on the Board of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing today to express our **support for LD 168, An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer, or Exchange of Firearms.**

As individuals in positions of leadership or influence in our communities, I'm sure you've been asked the question "What keeps you up at night?" As a pediatrician, that issue is gun violence. I have cared for children and teenagers who have suffered life-altering injuries or death as a result of firearms far more often than I care to admit. Their injuries are seared into my memory and serve as a constant reminder of how unbelievably easy it is in this country for children and teenagers to have their lives interrupted by firearms, made possible by weak policies regarding gun safety.

Gun violence is a public health crisis in the US, where deaths by firearms have outpaced motor vehicle accidents as the leading cause of death for children and teens aged 1 to 19 in the United States.¹ There are significant opportunities to improve these statistics with gun safety policies that are supported by a majority of Americans, and in many cases by most gun owners as well.

LD 168 closes the gun show loophole and requires background checks for the sale, transfer, or exchange of firearms at gun shows or between private parties while allowing exemptions for transfers between family members. We know that 30% of guns involved in criminal trafficking are connected to gun shows, where background checks aren't required. The trafficking of firearms involves a highly efficient, organized, and profitable underground industry that moves guns from legal manufacture to dealers to criminals and others who are prohibited from purchasing guns through traditional means. Research has shown that background checks save lives. In states that require a background check for private handgun sales, there are 48% fewer firearm suicides, while the rates of suicide by other methods are nearly identical. Johns Hopkins University researchers found that the 2007 repeal of Missouri's background check requirement was associated with a 25% increase in the gun homicide rate. We also know that these policies have broad support: 88% of those surveyed in the US, including 85% of gun owners, favor universal background checks on sales of all weapons.¹

The American Academy of Pediatrics is committed to protecting children from firearm-related injury and violence. We support specific measures to reduce the destructive effects of guns in the lives of children and adolescents. We urge each of you to consider the potential lives you could save as a result of passing LD 168.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Anderson DO".

Joe Anderson, DO, FAAP, Co-Chair, Advocacy Committee

¹ American Academy of Pediatrics. Universal Background Checks for Gun Purchases. 2023 (<https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/state-advocacy/universal-background-checks-for-gun-purchases/>).