
**Testimony of Andrea Mancuso, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence
In Support of LD 168: “An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer
or Exchange of Firearms”
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Monday, April 3, 2023**

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am writing on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV)¹ in support of LD 168, “An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms.”

Over the last 20 years, the majority of perpetrators of domestic abuse homicides in Maine used firearms to kill their victims. The Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel (Homicide Review Panel) released its 13th Biennial Report last week.² Of the intimate partner homicides reviewed by the panel in its most recent reporting period, 70% were committed with a firearm. Recognizing the importance of keeping firearms out of the hands of those in our communities who have committed domestic violence, state and federal law (both in concert and individually) act to prohibit possession by these individuals. Our laws prohibit possession by those defendants who have been convicted by a criminal court of having committed domestic violence, sometimes permanently, and also can temporarily prohibit certain defendants who are subject to a civil protection from abuse order for the length of time a court has determined to be appropriate. However, the current gaps that exist in Maine’s laws around background checks leave holes that act to make these prohibitions less effective.

In its most recent report, the Homicide Review Panel observed, yet again, that removing firearms from dangerous individuals and/or people known to be legally prohibited from possessing firearms can enhance safety and minimize the risk of both injuries and lethality. LD 168 would work to close some of the current gaps, subjecting important firearms sales, transfers and exchanges to background checks that would flag whether a person has recently become prohibited due to domestic violence.

¹ MCEDV represents a membership of the eight regional domestic violence resource centers across Maine as well as the Immigrant Resource Center of Maine. Last year, our programs provided services to more than 12,000 survivors of domestic abuse and violence and their children in our state.

² The 13th Biennial Report of the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel (April 2021), available at: <https://www.maine.gov/ag/docs/DAHRRP-Report-for-Posting-ACCESSIBLE.pdf>.

Keeping guns out of the hands of domestic violence perpetrators does more than just protect that person's intimate partner. A recent study of more than 700 mass shootings over the past six years found that 60% were either domestic violence attacks or committed by men with histories of domestic violence.³ Closing loopholes that allow domestic violence perpetrators to continue to access firearms when a background check would reveal them as a prohibited person not only increases safety for the person who they have been abusing but also increases the safety of those in proximity. Background checks for all firearm sales are essential to ensuring our own statutes around prohibiting firearms from domestic violence perpetrators are appropriately enforced.

MCEDV and our member programs are happy to serve as a resource to this Committee as you continue to discuss these important issues.

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³ Gu, Jackie, "Deadliest Mass Shootings Are Often Preceded by Violence at Home," (June 30, 2020). See also, Gold, Liza H., "Domestic Violence, Firearms, and Mass Shootings," J Am Acad Psychiatry Law (Feb 5 2020).