

April 3, 2023

**To:** Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

**From:** Mary Owen, 22 Sewall Street, Augusta, Maine 04330

**Re:** Public Hearing: LD 168, An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms.

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and distinguished members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I am Mary Owen, and I live in Augusta. I am writing in support of LD 168, a bill that would expand background checks on firearms to cover gun shows and advertised sales.

There were 178 firearm fatalities in Maine in 2021 – a 15.5% increase over 2020 deaths (154 deaths). The victims are not limited to those killed, injured, or present during the traumatic event. The social, emotional, physical, and mental health repercussions of gun violence affect all of us.

I don't know if a background check before a gun is purchased at a private sale or gun show will result in fewer Mainers dying from a bullet. I don't know if it will prevent despondent angry people from killing kids, students, parishioners, customers, or themselves. What I know is that we must do more to prevent gun violence.

Under federal law, gun retailers must have a federal firearms license and are legally mandated to complete a background check for every firearm sold to a nonlicensed person. A loophole in this law has allowed private sellers to circumvent background checks. If the goal is to keep guns out of the hands of anyone not legally entitled to have them because of age, criminal background, or incompetence, a background check should be required regardless of where the transaction occurs.

Mandatory background checks for all gun purchases will not end gun violence, but a background check will help to keep guns out of the hands of impulsive and dangerous people. We owe this protection to our children, grandchildren, and communities. LD 168 gets us closer to this commitment.

Thank you for listening.

Mary Owen  
Augusta  
LD 168

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