

# MaineHealth

Testimony of Dr. Kristine Pleacher  
In Support of LD 60  
“An Act to Require a 72-hour Waiting Period After the Sale of a Firearm”  
April 3, 2023

Honorable Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury and Members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, I am a Portland resident, a pediatric critical care physician at Maine Medical Center, a member of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Gun Safety, and a concerned citizen. I am speaking today on behalf of the MaineHealth to request your support for this legislation.

As part of our vision of “Working Together so our Communities are the Healthiest in America,” MaineHealth carefully identifies legislative opportunities to improve the health and well-being of Mainers. LD 60 requires a 72-hour waiting period between the purchase of a firearm from a licensed dealer and delivery of said firearm to the purchaser. This “cooling off period” has proven essential in preventing impulsive suicides and homicides, and thus we support this bill

There is substantial data in the medical literature that firearm presence is associated with higher rates of suicide and homicide.<sup>i,iii,iii</sup> It is estimated that 17% of homicides and 7-11% of suicides could be prevented with a waiting period.<sup>iv</sup> Firearms are one of the most lethal means of attempting suicide with a case fatality rate >90%.<sup>v</sup> Only 10% of individuals who survive a suicide attempt go on to eventually die by suicide.<sup>vi</sup> Therefore, if we can reduce the lethality of the means used in a suicide attempt, we can save lives.

Maine has high rates of suicide, particularly among our veterans.<sup>vii</sup> Maine Veterans utilize firearms in suicide attempts at a disproportionate rate to non-military suicide attempts.<sup>viii</sup> The suicide rate in Maine has also been increasing at a rate higher than the national average.<sup>ix</sup> While more can undoubtedly be done to help reduce suicides in Maine, this legislation is an important step.

Please support LD 60. A waiting period between purchase and delivery of a firearm will save lives.

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<sup>i</sup> Miller M, et al. Firearms and Suicide in the Northeast. *J Trauma*. 2004;57:626-632.

<sup>ii</sup> Anglemeyer A, et al. The accessibility of firearms and risk for suicide and homicide victimization among household members. *Ann Intern Med*. 2014;160:101-110.

<sup>iii</sup> Kawano B, et al. Restrictive firearm laws and firearm-related suicide. *J Am Coll Surg*. 2022;236:37-44.

<sup>iv</sup> Luca M, et al. Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths. *PNAS*. 2017;114:12162-12165.

<sup>v</sup> Miller M, Barber C, White RA, Azrael D. Firearms and suicide in the United States: is risk independent of underlying suicidal behavior? *Am J Epidemiol*. 2013;178(6):946-955.

<sup>vi</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Means Matter. [Attempters' Longterm Survival | Means Matter | Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) Accessed 04/02/2023.

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<sup>vii</sup> Rideout, V, Kennard R, Wilcox AM, Flomenbaum. Demographics of suicide victims in Maine 2017 and 2018 with emphasis on suicide notes. *Maine Policy Review* 28.2 (2019):49-57  
<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol28/iss2/7>

<sup>viii</sup> Stewart A, et al. Military Suicide in Maine 2015-2019. Maine Violent Death Reporting System and The University of Maine Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center.

<sup>ix</sup> Stewart A, et al. Suicides in Maine 2015-2019. Maine Violent Death Reporting System and The University of Maine Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center.