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Testimony in support of LD 168 – ‘An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms’

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety; I am Mary Tedesco-Schneck and I am a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and an Associate Professor at the University of Maine in the School of Nursing. I also serve as a member of the board for the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Today I am speaking on my behalf and on the behalf of the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

This testimony is in support of LD 168 An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms.

Gun violence is a public safety issue. The role of government in our civilized society is to protect public safety particularly for those who are most vulnerable in our society. This proposed legislation will positively impact the safety of all Maine citizens which includes children and adolescents, two vulnerable populations.

Children and adolescents are affected directly by loss of their own life and equally as important by collateral damage when gun violence strikes. In 2021, the Maine CDC reported a total of 178 firearm fatalities (an increase of 14% from 2020). Of these fatalities almost 89% were from suicide and 9.6% were from homicide. Analysis of firearm fatalities by age reveals that 9% of individuals less than 25 years of age died from suicide by firearm and 68% of individuals between the ages of 25 (35%) and 64 (33%) died from suicide by firearm. Individuals within this age group may be mothers, fathers, and grandparents. Loss of a parent or significant adult in a child's life is collateral damage.

Additionally, school shootings are on the rise. Our children and adolescents should be able to enjoy the same level of safety and comfort in attending school that most of us did when we were their age. They should not fear the possibility of being gunned down in their schools or witnessing the death by gun violence of a friend, teacher, janitor, or others on school property.

By performing criminal background checks individuals who are ineligible to purchase firearms are identified and tragic violent acts including suicide may be prevented.

Thank you for considering this legislation.

Respectfully,

Mary Tedesco-Schneck PhD, RN, CPNP