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LD 551

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Hillary Shende, and I am here to strongly testify against LD 551.

As legislators charged with protecting public safety, you have the opportunity to save lives through public policy. So the most important thing you need to know is, will this bill save lives or endanger them? The scientifically sound studies on this subject are plentiful, and they all come to the same conclusion: the presence of firearms, in any location, makes that location LESS safe, not MORE safe, from gun violence. Studies published by The American Academy of Physicians, the Oxford University Press, The National Institutes of Health, Scientific American, the Rand Corporation, Harvard University, the journal Nature, the New England Journal of Medicine, Boston University, The Kaiser Family Foundation and many others have all concluded that the presence of firearms significantly INCREASES the risk that people in that vicinity will experience gun violence.

As a mother of school age children, this bill terrifies me, because if it is made law, my children will be much more likely to be shot and killed. If this bill or the bill to arm school staff passes, I will probably take my children out of school and out of state, because I refuse to live in a state that cares more about expanding gun usage than keeping children alive.

So why would anyone introduce this bill when the research on its dangerous effects is so clear? I'll tell you why. It's the same reason someone has introduced the bill to arm school staff and to "stand your ground." Money. When guns are allowed in more places, more people bring guns into those places. And the more guns we have in each place, the more gun violence we experience in those places. And the more gun violence our society experiences, the more fearful we become. And the more fearful we become, the more guns we buy. These additional guns, of course, bring about even more gun violence, we become even more fearful, and we buy even more guns.

Who benefits from this insane feedback loop? Not the people, that's for sure. We become the victims of tragedy upon tragedy, getting ever more distrustful of our neighbors as we arm ourselves to the teeth.

So who DOES benefit from the gun violence feedback loop? I'll tell you who: the gun manufacturers, their lobbyists, and the legislators they've convinced to do their bidding. They all get paid handsomely while we suffer. This is part of their marketing strategy. Make everybody scared with ever more gun violence so they'll buy more and more guns. That's it. That's what this bill and all the other gun use expansion bills are about. Money. Trading tens of thousands of American lives every year simply to grow the profit margin of one industry. So I leave you with a question only you can answer. How much are Mainer's lives worth to you?