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Rumford

LD 1392: An Act Directing the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention To Release Annually Public Health Data Regarding Certain Fatalities and Hospitalizations  
Barbara C. Arsenault  
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify for LD 1392. My name is Barbara Arsenault and I am a resident of Rumford.

I am a retired high school guidance counselor and volunteer advocating for veterans through my membership of American Legion Auxiliary. I am the Rural Engagement Lead for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense and live in a gun owning home. I support the second amendment. With this background I am testifying for LD1392.

For a healthier Maine we need to have timely and accurate data on the current status of our citizens. This includes gun violence and how it affects our state. When we have up to date resources we can move forward with effective prevention measures. Monitoring and evaluation are necessary components of the public health approach to prevention. It is important to have timely and reliable data to monitor the extent of the problem and to evaluate the impact of prevention efforts.

In regards to homicides I have turned to the private sector for timely information. Each January, Bangor Daily News has an article of the homicides in Maine which occurred the previous year. Each tragedy is written with details of the place and weapon used. Last year all eight firearm related homicides took place in the second congressional district. In 2019 11 out of 14 firearm homicides were in my district and in 2018 6 out of 9.

An example of delayed information comes from the Veterans Administration where information on state by state statistics are available with a two year delay. The 2018 statistics were on the website in November 2020. This is especially challenging if you are looking at a three year pattern as 2015 is six years ago. Sadly, there were 47 veteran suicides in Maine in 2018 and 75% were by gunfire. Thirty four out of the 47 veterans were over the age of 55.

I support LD 1392 so we can have an accurate look at our state and have healthy programs for our future.