



President:

Camilla Shannon

Vice President:

Dr. Edward Walworth

Treasurer:

Lisa Gilbreath

Secretary:

James Parmentier

Board of Directors:

Dr. Reilly Cooper

Dr. David Fitz

Dr. Geoff Gratwick

Polly Haight Frawley

William Harwood

Chief John Kilbride

Polly Nichols

James Poliquin

Judi Richardson

Wayne Richardson

Kimberly Sampson

Executive Director:

Geoff Bickford

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support LD 1392, "An Act Directing the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention to Release Annually Public Health Data Regarding Certain Fatalities and Hospitalizations."

For 21 years the Maine Gun Safety Coalition has advocated for common sense gun safety measures that can and will save the lives of Mainers while still protecting the rights afforded gun owners under the state and federal constitutions. That is why we strongly support LD 1392. This bill merely seeks to provide already-existing information in a simple, central report, so that policy makers and the public that employees them may have a complete picture of the deaths and injuries resulting from firearms. Nothing more, nothing less.

Like cigarettes and car accidents before, our nation has wisely begun to see our gun violence crisis as a public health issue. But as the doctors and other public health officials who have provided words of support in favor of this bill well know, even a problem that leaves 40,000 Americans dead, and tens of thousands more injured every year, can only be understood, and corrected, when we have the best available information.

That information is currently unavailable in any useful, timely, or complete form in this state. At present there is no central location to obtain the data this bill seeks. While hospitals already have mandatory reporting laws related to treating gunshot wounds, a collection of that information apparently exists nowhere in the state. For most data on firearm fatalities we must wait for the federal CDC to release the information, and it can take months or years for the agency to collect and make that data public after the end of a calendar year.

To be clear, this bill does not require any branch of government or agency to do a single thing with the information besides report it. It simply provides to Mainers, and their elected officials, what they deserve to know: The truth, the facts, the numbers, of those lost or injured annually from gunfire.

After this information is reported, some will argue that Maine does not have a gun violence problem, while others will argue the opposite. It will be up to each side to persuade those in power what to do with the knowledge the report will provide. It will be up to public health researchers to utilize the data to offer

solutions to reduce the number of deaths Maine sees every year from firearm suicides, homicides and accidents.

But how could anyone be against more information?

On behalf of our Board of Directors and our thousands of statewide supporters, we urge this committee to issue an "Ought to Pass" report on LD 1392.

Sincerely,

Geoff Bickford

Executive Director

(207) 780-0501

Geoff@mainegunsafety.org