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Appropriations & Financial Affairs
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**Testimony in support of
LD 1392, An Act Directing the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention To
Release Annually Public Health Data Regarding Certain Fatalities and
Hospitalizations
Senator Cathy Breen
April 29, 2021**

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, my name is Cathy Breen. I represent Maine Senate District 25, which includes the communities of Chebeague Island, Cumberland, Falmouth, Gray, Long Island, Yarmouth, and about half of the City of Westbrook. I am here in support of **LD 1392, An Act Directing the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention To Release Annually Public Health Data Regarding Certain Fatalities and Hospitalizations.**

The bill simply directs the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to collect data on firearm-related deaths sorted by age in four categories — homicides, suicides, accidents, and hospitalizations that did not result in death — and include this data in the CDC director’s annual report to the Legislature. It also requires the CDC to provide data on the make and model of the firearms used in each instance.

As a legislator who is concerned about suicide and domestic violence, I support this bill because it would help us get a handle on how to improve safety while respecting people’s second amendment rights. No matter where you come down in the issue of gun ownership, having specific data as to how guns are used in our society can provide much-needed clarity to the debate.

The data we do have on gun use in Maine can be staggering. Total deaths by firearm increased 45 percent from 2010 to 2019, compared to 17 percent nationwide.¹ In the same 10-year period, suicides committed using a gun increased 50 percent, compared with 13 percent nationwide.² Maine is 9th in the nation in the rate of women killed by men.³ Our firearm mortality rate per capita is higher than any other New England state.⁴ And nearly half of Maine households contain at least one gun.⁵

¹ ‘Maine Gun Deaths: 2019,’ The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, accessed April 28, 2021, <https://efsgv.org/state/maine/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20163%20people%20in,deaths%20and%20homicides%20were%208%25.>

² Ibid.

³ ‘Gun Violence Statistics,’ Maine Gun Safety Education Coalition, accessed April 28, 2021, <http://www.mainegunsafety.org/gun-violence-statistics>

⁴ Ibid

Additionally, the just-released report from the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel shows that, over the past 20 years, firearms were used in 62% of intimate partner homicides.⁶ From 2018 to 2020, the number is 70%.⁷ In the previous two decades of the Panel’s research, Mainers who commit domestic abuse-related murder have used guns more than any other method.⁸ Among the Panel’s recommendations are:

- “Consistent and effective enforcement of Firearms Relinquishment Orders granted with Protection from Abuse Orders,”
- “Development of statewide policies and procedures to ensure the relinquishment of firearms to law enforcement by persons legally prohibited from possessing them,” and
- “Recognition by everyone – bystanders and all professional disciplines – of the significant connection among suicide, homicide, and firearms, and the importance of involving law enforcement to secure or remove firearms to prevent tragedy.”⁹

Given this data, there can be no downside to providing legislators and public officials with as much information as possible in order to make sense of these numbers and find ways to reduce them. I have introduced gun-related legislation in the past two Legislatures and am familiar with the argument that Maine gun owners are responsible folks, and that so-called “gun control” bills are a solution in need of a problem. I’ve also been asked for data to back up my concerns. This bill will help Maine analyze how folks are using their guns to determine where we should focus our energy in preventing gun injuries.

Please support LD 1392. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.

⁵ Jessica Learish, ‘Gun Ownership by State,’ CBS News, July 23, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/gun-ownership-rates-by-state/>

⁶ *The 13th Biennial Report of the Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel*. Augusta, 2021. Accessed April 28, 2021. <https://www.maine.gov/ag/docs/DAHRP-Report-for-Posting-ACCESSIBLE.pdf>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.