

## Testimony for LD1392

Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee

I am Chris Campbell. I live in Belfast.

I am testifying because I am a grandfather of three children who live in Maine. They are vulnerable to firearm mortality, and LD1392 would help reduce it in our state.

Part of the need for this important bill is that some people think Maine's firearm mortality is not a problem.

The data say otherwise.

The National Center for Health Statistics ([cdc.gov/nchs](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs)) shows that the **firearm mortality rate in Maine in 2019, the latest reporting year, was 11.5/100,000**. This number is higher than that of any other New England state [CT -5.3, MA - 3.4, NH - 10.7, RI - 4.6, and VT - 9.3] as well as New Jersey (4.1) and New York (3.9). The average rate for all U.S. states is 13.4.

An important responsibility of the Maine government is the health of its citizens. The Maine CDC plays a leading role in public health, and it is slated by LD1392 to play a leading role in data collection about firearm mortality. When dealing with complex problems like firearm mortality, it is essential to collect data that will lead to good decisions. As we all know, the Maine CDC has been collecting data about Covid-19 to address questions like Where is it surging? Who is most vulnerable to it? and How do we limit its damage? Covid took a terrible toll on Maine with 777 deaths in 2020. The US CDC reported 163 firearm deaths in Maine in 2019. This is about one fifth of 2020 Covid death rate, but Covid will likely be controlled. The death rate of the opioid epidemic lies between the firearm and the 2020 Covid rates, but we can hope that it will taper. Gun deaths, however, may go up because of a large, recent increase in gun purchases in Maine. Very sadly, 88% of the 163 gun deaths in 2019 were suicides, mostly by young people. The possibility of a school shooting exacts a toll of anxiety on children and parents.

LD1392 directs the Maine CDC to collect data about Maine firearm mortality that will help reduce its tragic impact on our state. I urge you to vote for this bill.

Chris Campbell  
Belfast