

## 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 Ned Claxton, Representative Michele Meyer and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

My name is Polly Haight Frawley, I live in Cumberland and I am testifying in support of this LD.

I worked for a behavior health provider for 14 years. Each year we studied the annual report put out by the Maine's Office of Behavioral Health, or its predecessor, on drug use in Maine. My company was in the business of prevention and treatment, trying to save lives. The report was studied, discussed in house and analyzed at gatherings of providers. Changes were made in the services provided to try to address the findings in the report targeting the populations, ages, counties and drugs identified in the report.

If you look for data on injuries and deaths caused by guns in Maine, there is a lack of a centralized database. For example, the Department of Public Service compiles extensive information on crimes in Maine but does not address gun violence that is not defined as a crime. Similarly the Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel issues a report that is limited to domestic violence.

The Maine CDC data addresses suicide by gun but the data on its website dates from 2016 and 2017, some of it from 2010 and 2012. This is the most recent data on the site in spite of the fact that the report provides horrifying data that suicide among Mainers aged 10-24 is the second most leading cause of death and the use of firearms was the most frequent method. Mental health problems have only grown during the pandemic. And the number of guns in Maine has grown as well, a 50% increase in 2020 over 2019 as reported by the FBI not including sales completed without a background check.

How can we address what is clearly a growing gun violence crisis unless Maine legislators, government officials and citizens have complete up to date data and it can be found readily? This is not much to ask considering the lethality of a gun. Thank you.

